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Our
Divine
Saviour
*and other
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OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR
AND OTHER DISCOURSES

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WHO IS JESUS CHRIST?

I.

THE WORD MADE FLESH.

THE Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, which is the centre stone of Christianity, will always be discussed, contradicted, and rejected by a great portion of mankind. It will always be a scandal to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. Something may be done, however, by each one in his own immediate neighbourhood, to throw some little light upon a mystery which, although it has the darkness of its own mysteriousness, need not have the additional obscurity of human ignorance and prejudice. No one insists on the depth and difficulty of God's revelation more than St. Paul,¹ but no one shows it forth so clearly, and makes it look so reasonable to the inquirers of his own times. He told the wise men who were wise with worldly wisdom, that they would be sure to mistake and pass by the wisdom of God. He told the 'high-minded'

¹ Eph. iii.

that they would be blind to the light of revealed truth. But he assured the simple and the lowly, the 'little ones' of whom Isaiah and David had prophesied, and of whom Jesus had spoken, that the truth need be no secret for them; they were the ones for whom it was meant.

The question, Who is Jesus Christ? requires very many words to answer it completely. But there is a short answer which may serve us for the present. Jesus Christ is He in whom 'the fulness of the Godhead dwelleth corporally.'² Jesus Christ is the God-man. He is man, having body and soul, senses and organs, like other men. He is God—God in the flesh, God possessing a human dwelling, God not restricted nor localised, yet capable of being seen by the eye and pointed to with the finger.

This is our subject. It is a matter which is vital to the world; for the revelation of 'Jesus Christ' is the central truth of God's dispensation for man's eternal well-being. To deny it is to cut oneself away from the shelter of the harbour, and to drift out into the measureless ocean. If Jesus Christ be God, the worship of man's heart, which is God's by essential right and justice, is due to Jesus Christ by the same right and justice. If Jesus Christ be God, the system, or school, or religion which He introduced into the world is the only truth; the body of men whom He commissioned to teach are the only teachers of truth; and the means of grace or spiritual life which He set up are the only means by which man can live the life which he

² Col. ii. 9.

must live, or be for ever blighted. On the other hand, if He is not God, you cannot worship Him; you will find it difficult to explain His own language or to account for His claims; you will not allow indefectibility to His religious system, or infallibility to His code of morality; you will look to a point in the future when Christianity will be as far left behind in the world's march as Moses or David is now.

In treating this momentous theme, our method will not be that of dry controversy. We shall rather endeavour to set forth the truth, as the Catholic Church holds it, and let it convince men's minds by the very power of its own light. The acuteness of man's tongue can argue a good many things into doubt or into certainty; but he cannot argue the solid earth from under his feet, or with words sweep the sun out of the heavens. It is the fate of the most holy Mystery of the Incarnation to be misconceived by the world: 'the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not.'² But it is light for all that; and men, blind as they are, have their eyes, and, with God's help, can use them; and therefore it is reasonable to suppose that the best way to convince them of the existence of the Incarnation is to try to let them see what it is.

The thought of God is the great thought which takes hold of a man's mind and heart, and produces what is called Religion. The thought of God, revealed in the primitive revelation, has never quite died out of any corner of the earth. It is the reviving, the stirring up, the writing out at large of this thought of God,

² John i. 5.

which has given the heathen from time to time grander and higher ideas of goodness and virtue. It is the proclamation from the heavens of this thought which men have called God's Revelation. And in the thought of God are included two thoughts. They are not so much two thoughts as two faces of the same thought; they differ from each other no otherwise than as the fiery mass of the sun is distinguished from the light that falls upon the world. God in His own nature—God in His contact with His creatures. The history of all religious thought—of natural religion, of revelation, of Judaism, heathenism, and Christianity, of orthodoxy, of heresy, of unbelief—it is all a history of the changes of men's thought as to what God is, and how He has come into communication with man. And the question, Who is Jesus Christ? cannot be answered without treating afresh the old thoughts.

But the Incarnation, although it is intimately connected with questions as to what God is, and although we shall often have to allude to such questions, more especially concerns the matter of God's contact with creation. The Incarnation, if it be a fact, is simply the most intimate and immediate communication of the Creator to His creation which can possibly exist.

Every one who believes in a God must want to know what his God does to him, or with him, or for him. He must look up with anxious eye to the heavens, in some sense or other, for a sign or a word. He must scrutinise curiously and reverently his own heart to see what marks of Divine interference he can read there. A God who should launch His creature into existence

and then forget him, is no God for the heart of man. A God who should sit apart and afar off while the worlds roll on and human life transacts itself, is what man's thought has hardly pictured—never pictured, except when it was morbid and corrupt. There is one enormous religious system—that of Buddhism—which consists almost wholly of an effort, a tendency, a progress (as its votaries think) towards final absorption in Deity. Paganism, in all its varieties, from the religions of Greece and Rome to those of New Zealand and Tierra del Fuego, owes its existence and its life to the imperious need of man's heart for the presence of God in the world. To the heathen, the sky, the air, the hills and streams, and the works of the potter and the smith, became not merely symbols of a divine presence, but divinities themselves.

The Revelation of the true and living God, which has never been wanting to the world, which was obscured by the world's sins, but preserved and added to in a chosen race, and perfected in the dispensation of the Gospel, has constantly recognised that man seeks his Creator's hand; and it has taught him how his Creator's hand is felt—how his Maker's touch is on his soul. We have, in the opening pages of the Bible, a description, brief and mysterious, of the state of innocence and grace which is called Paradise—the state in which Faith teaches us that the human race was originally constituted. We can easily make out that in Paradise there was a grand and marvellous manifestation of God. There God walked with man, and spoke to him as friend to friend. What shape or form this ma-

nifestation took—how much of the beauty of the Infinite was visible in the Garden of Innocence—we do not know. But, to judge from all known analogy, we may conclude that it was at once a marvellous grace of the heart and a marvellous vision of the eye; that God walked with man, spoke with him, and communed with his soul and his sense in a way worthy of that Garden of Pleasure in which it had pleased His Goodness to place him. When the Fall had brought the curse upon the earth, and it sat in darkness and the shadow of death, the very essence of the curse, and the very meaning of the darkness, was that there was a wall of separation, a veil of ignorance, between man and his God. Whenever we read in Holy Scripture of God's mercy to the heathen, it comes in the shape of a light, a communication, a gracious speaking to the heart, and sometimes to the sense. And the Patriarchs, the Fathers, and the chosen race to whom it was given to know Him amid the heathen darkness, enjoyed from time to time wondrous manifestations of His Presence, and intimate communion with Him. Any one who reads the Book of Genesis attentively can see that there were always local spots upon the earth where God showed Himself by His power; where He spoke in revelation, and where He poured out the unction of His favour. The great vision of Jacob at Bethel, so minutely recorded by the Holy Spirit, is only a type of what happened very often. The apparition to Abraham, to Jacob, to Moses, and others, of One who called Himself not merely the Angel of Jehova, but Jehova, is a perpetually recurring incident in the earlier books of the Bible.

During the journeyings of Israel in the desert, the Presence of God was visible all the time, in cloud and pillar of smoke. On the dedication-day of Solomon's Temple, the glory of the Lord—the visible symbol of His abiding presence—filled the whole of the sanctuary; and He abode there with His people. These things were what we may call regular and continuous; and if we take into account, in addition, the numberless ways in which God is recorded to have spoken, to have done wonders, to have moved hearts, to have enlightened minds, we are driven to conclude that, in the Bible, and in the history of Religion given in the Bible, there cannot be such a thing as Religion without intimate communion with that God, Who is the beginning and the end of all Religion.

But all that came to pass under the Law of Nature and under the Law of Moses was only a preparation for something better. A stupendous change was to take place; a magnificent grace was to be given to the world. Call it Redemption, call it the Gospel, call it the dispensation of Grace, it was to be the end, the consummation, the completion of God's mercy to a sinful race. And its chief feature, as we might have expected, was to be a communication of the Creator with His Creatures more intimate than had ever been known before. The Saviour, the King to come, the Prophet, the great High-Priest, was to be called, and to be nothing less than EMMANUEL—God with us. God was to be with His people in a new and transcendent way. The whole world was to be filled with a new divine Light; new fountains of sovereign grace and

mercy for the heart of man were to spring up in the wilderness, till it blossomed as the rose; and this Light and this Mercy, this plenteous Redemption, were to be the work and the gift of a Person, who should be a Man, and yet Who should be 'above all, God blessed for ever.'⁴

When the hour came which God's eternal Providence had marked as the 'fulness' of time, then a Man appeared in the world. He came into the world as the poorest and the lowliest come into it—unnoted, unhonoured, and obscure. He did not blaze from the heavens at the noonday hour, and flash the knowledge of Himself over all the earth. He was born in the silent depths of the midnight, in a hovel on the slope of Bethlehem. The simple shepherds were the only ones who heard the angel heralds utter His titles and proclaim His birth. And when they went to see Him, He looked to them, as to all others, no more than a little child of Adam's race and Israel's stock. They could see that He lay in that poor bed in the dumb helplessness of common infancy. They could tell that the rough touch of the elements, and the ungentle nursing of His rude surroundings, were to Him, as to others before Him, pain and misery. They could see that He, like other babes, felt the love of His Mother, and nestled with what seemed a blind unconscious happiness in her arms. It was so. This was Jesus. He was circumcised, and the name of Jesus was given to Him. He was the Christ—the anointed One; the One Whom the grace of the Deity had anointed far above all His

⁴ Rom. ix. 5.

fellows—so incomparably above them, that He was, by excellence, the Christ. The child of Bethlehem and of Nazareth was Jesus Christ. You might have met Him at Nazareth, as He walked with uncertain step by His Mother's side, holding by her robe. You might have seen Him, a boy of twelve, startling the Temple schools as by an apparition, and afterwards passing the night in prayer on the mountain He was afterwards to visit so often. His fellow townsmen saw Him at His labour and mechanical toil. They called Him 'the carpenter'—the son of Joseph. And they saw that, after so long a sojourn in His hidden life, He passed away from Nazareth, and began to speak to the children of His father Abraham in Galilee and Judæa. The traders of Capharnaum, the fishers of Genesareth, the shepherds of the hills of Galilee, knew a Man who preached a higher life, and a gentler love of others, and more sublime beatitudes, than the Doctors of their own day, or even the Prophets and the Saints of old. The crowds that thronged Jerusalem on the great legal feasts, and camped out on every hill that stood round about, knew a Man of God, Who wrought wonders and denounced wickedness, and said that God was His Father. The Priests and Scribes and Pharisees learned to know this Man, and to fear and hate Him. The Roman President and his officers watched Him, and consulted about Him. At last a violent end came; and what the world saw was a Man dragged before the Roman power by a tumultuous Jewish mob, interrogated, tortured, and at last crucified on the place of common execution. And after all this, and after they had seen His lifeless

body laid down in the hewn rock, He was seen again. Witnesses, appointed and pre-ordained, saw Him, spoke to Him, handled Him, ate with Him ; and when He had gone in and out among them for forty days, He walked with them out at the gate where once He had been dragged in, fettered ; and going up the familiar hill, He rose visibly and bodily into the spaces of the air, and the ministering clouds hid Him, that He was seen no more. This was Jesus Christ ; this Man, Whom men knew, as they knew other men, in childhood, in manhood, in labour, in teaching, in death. They saw Him, and they heard Him, and they touched Him with their hands. We, in our thoughts, may find it difficult to realise what manner of Man was Jesus Christ. But, during thirty-three years, men had but to use their senses to know what He looked like, what was His stature, His comeliness, His grace, His loving eye, His gentle voice. The records of His going to and fro, of His speech and of His action, are written down, though partially and incompletely, by men who knew Him personally. ‘That which was from the beginning,’ says the Apostle John, ‘which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life, . . . we declare unto you.’⁵

This was the Man, then ; this was the Jesus Christ, Who was to be the means of giving to mankind the most complete communion with their God which had ever been known upon the earth. To look at Him hastily, as men looked at Him when He was alive, we

⁵ 1 John i. 1-3.

might feel inclined to think that this final phase of God's revelation was a falling-off. Jesus Christ, we might admit, taught justice of a high type, and preached sanctity such as had not been preached before. But He looked common and mean in comparison with the old revelations of God's will and law. He walked the earth as a man ; He did not, as an angel, condescend to it from the Heavens, and, after shining brightly for a brief moment, disappear. He sat on the mountain, and taught God's law ; but there was no awful convulsion of nature ; no thunder and lightning ; no resounding fearful cry of the awe-inspiring trumpet. The clouds, the brightness, the startling and grand phenomena that spoke of heavenly interference in the Old Covenant, were apparently wanting to the lowly, poor, and unprotected Man who set out from Nazareth to call His nation to repentance. Where was the wonder and the greatness of this God's final message and communication with the world ?

The answer is, that this Man Jesus Christ was not merely the vehicle of the Word and of the grace of God, as angels had been, but He *was* the Word of God, and the fulness of true and real grace. And though many who looked with eyes blinded by worldly prepossession, or with carelessness or prejudice, were scandalised in Him, and turned away dissatisfied, nevertheless the earnest seeker was soon upon the road to find out a greatness and a power in that human form which threw far into the shade all the miracles which angels had wrought on the earth and in the heavens.

Carry your thought to that day and hour when

Jesus Christ sat upon the rising slopes of that hill near the lake of Galilee, and spoke a long instruction to a crowd that had come out to see Him. There is something in the attitude of the Teacher, and in the look of the listeners, that tells you this is not a common man. But there are words which reach you now and then, whose power is that of the lightning flash which rent the clouds on Sinai of old. Many prophets had spoken to the house of Israel, but no prophet had ever dared to criticise and ever to set aside the law of Moses. This Man speaks, as you perceive, 'with authority,' and He declares that He is come to fulfil the law of Moses; as if that law, given by angels in the hand of a Mediator,⁶ had been waiting for His coming before it was complete. He tells them that the law of Moses is not perfect enough for the time that has come. 'It was said to them of old, Thou shalt not kill.' Yes, this was said 'of old;' it is one of the awful Ten Commandments. 'But I say to you' . . .! Who is this that thus presumes to develop and extend the Decalogue? He does not say, 'Thus saith the Lord,' as Ezechiel would have said, or Jeremias. It is Himself who betters the law which God had first imprinted on man's heart, and then revealed with awful sanctions through the hand of Moses. Here is a claim to do what God alone can do. It is made by the Man Jesus Christ—because Jesus Christ is God. Nothing less than all this is signified by the words and acts which Evangelists record and Apostles comment upon; nothing less than this is stated in explicit terms by Jesus

⁶ Gal. iii. 19.

Christ Himself, and by the witnesses He ordained to preach Him to the world.

We must dwell upon the fact that Jesus Christ is God. I am not proving it just now, or going into a discussion upon the genuineness of gospel or epistle, of chapter or of verse. I am taking the New Testament for granted. And it is interesting to see how the fact that Jesus Christ is God is there presented to the thought of the generations for whom the New Testament was written. It sometimes puzzles men not to be able to find in the Bible an express formal statement of this centre truth. I do not admit that this is so. But two things must be borne in mind. First, the Apostles were chiefly concerned with putting forth, not the doctrine of Christ's Godhead, which was easily admitted in one sense or another by all who abandoned Judaism, but the doctrine of His atonement—the doctrine of Justification and of Grace. And, secondly, the language of the peculiar race or races for whom St. Matthew, or St. Paul, or St. John had to write was not our language. They had different terms and different difficulties. And the propositions and the answers addressed to them took different shapes.

And yet St. John is surely most explicit. The Gospel of the Apostle of Love was written to develop the grand thought of its opening chapter—that the Word was God, and the Word was made Flesh. The Word! We must anxiously trace back the past in order to understand what is meant by a term like this. Our steps must measure back many an old and worn-out road before we can get to that standing-place where

John stood when he burst forth with that sublime beginning. We must listen to discussions in the Alexandrian Museum; and, farther back, to Platonic dialogues held in Athenian groves. We must turn over mysterious books of Scripture, in which uncreated Wisdom is treated as God, and yet as distinct from a Divine Personality. The *word* of a man was, primarily, the uttered sound, pregnant with sense, which told the hearer what the speaker thought. But, secondarily and more deeply, it was the thought itself—the conception of the mind—formulated and rounded off in an idea. In all philosophies there was and is a mystery and a cloud about this conception, idea, *word*. It is distinct from the mind or intelligence itself, because it rises out of it as a bubble rises on the surface of the spring, to be succeeded by another and another. And yet it lies so close against it and around it, that it seems to have no being which is not the very being of the mind. At one time it seems to be no otherwise distinct than as the green, or blue, or purple of the ever-moving ocean is distinct from the restless waves. At another, it seems to be formed and launched into being with something of the effort which an artist makes to give his forms of beauty to the world. A man makes his thought; it is the very substance of his mind; it is the very growth of that subtle seed which we call intelligence; and yet a man's thought oftentimes stands up beside him like a shadow of himself, haunting him, ruling him, torturing him, or soothing him. Such is the thought or conception of a human mind; the *word* of a man, which Plato reasoned on, and Philo used as

a mirror to catch reflections from the clouds. But if the *logos* of a finite mind was such a subtle thing, what power of thought or language could discuss the Logos of the mind of God? The Infinite has an infinite intelligence. That intelligence is ever active, or rather, it is ever act. What is that act? What is the Word of God?

The writers of the ancient covenant have left inspired descriptions of that wisdom which is to them what the Word is to St. John: 'Jehova possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old before the earth was made. . . . When He prepared the heavens, I was present. . . . I was with Him, forming all things.'⁷ This is the picture of the thought, or word, or wisdom of God, presented by the writer of as ancient a book as the Proverbs. And if we pass to the utterances of the Son of Sirach, we read at the very opening of the first chapter of Ecclesiasticus, 'All wisdom is from the Lord God, and hath been always with Him, and is before all time.'⁸ And the author of the book entitled Wisdom has three chapters—the seventh, the eighth, and the ninth—in which he applies all the resources of eloquence and poetry to describe a wisdom which is certainly not of this earth. She is the worker of all things, having all power, reaching from end to end mightily, and ordering all things sweetly. She sitteth by the throne of God. She is the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty, the image of His goodness. She

⁷ Proverbs viii. 22.

⁸ Eccclus. i. 1.

knoweth all the works of God, and was present when He made the world.

Such is the description in the Old Testament of that inmost act of the mind of God which St. John, speaking the language of the current philosophy of his day, calls the Word of God. By It God made all things. It was always with Him. It was before all time. *It was* GOD. There is no escaping from the rigour of that conclusion. It is God, and yet It is not the Father. It is begotten by God ; by an eternal begetting. It is consubstantial with the Father ; there is only one God. Yet It, and not the Father, was made Flesh. And the Word made Flesh was Jesus Christ. That Child Who was given to us in Bethlehem ; that Youth Who wrought at Nazareth ; that Preacher Who stirred up all Judæa and Galilee ; that loving Master Who called men after Him, and made them so faithful to Him ; that Martyr Who died in the eclipse on Calvary—that was the Word made Flesh.

This great mystery is called the Incarnation. It is a mystery, and a deep and dark mystery ; yet not all dark.

First of all, Jesus Christ is called, and is verily, God. Just as one may point out a man, and say of him, 'This is my brother' or 'my friend,' so we can say of Jesus Christ, 'This is the eternal God, Creator of heaven and earth, my Master, my Judge, my everlasting Hope.' You can hardly say that the Godhead *dwells* in Him ; for although the expression is not by any means unknown to the Fathers, yet, when used without explanation, it would seem to separate Christ

into two, or else to destroy His manhood altogether. He is not merely a man upon whose soul a large amount of Divine Grace has been poured. The royal unction, by which He is 'the Christ,' means the contact of the Godhead with a humanity in such an ineffable way that the one begins to belong to the other. He is still the Word; He has lost nothing of what He always was from all eternity; and therefore, in St. Paul's words, He thinks it no robbery to be 'equal to God.'⁹

But again, though He is God, He is Man. His humanity is no fiction; no unsubstantial film of delusive air to mock men's sense. His body is a real true body, born of Mary ever-virgin, pierced on the cross, sitting now at the right hand of God. And it is no mere brute machine without a soul, moved to and fro by the force of the Divinity within it. Man is man chiefly by his soul; and Jesus Christ has a human soul, united to His flesh like our souls are to our flesh; and His soul, in its circumscription of flesh, makes up His human nature. He has intelligence, like men must have if they are men; and He sees finite truth with that intelligence, and pursues it with His reason. He has imagination and the powers of the brain of man; and the forms and impressions of things, received by the ministry of sense, dwell in the subtle fibres and folds of nerve and brain, and revive, unite, and shape themselves into new shapes, as with other mortal men. With Him, as with us, the muscles and the members move at the soul's volition. With Him, the eye and

• Philip. ii. 6.

the ear, and the delicate surfaces where outward influences are the causes of vital acts, are busy and active as with us. The warm and life-sustaining blood pours through His veins, and a human heart beats within His breast—beats quickly, or beats slowly, to the varying wave of feeling that presses on the whole man. For He has human passions too—to use the word in strict and reverential sense. He has those thrills and movements of the corporeal frame which other men have, though with this enormous difference—that in Him they cannot so much as stir except at the bidding and allowance of the reason, guided by the Divinity which possesses it. But still, in the best and most worthy sense, He has human feeling—human passion.¹⁰ As a man feels, so He feels, love and sorrow, sadness and pain, joy and admiration. The shuddering of His flesh when He looks forward to His death, and when He meets His death, is true pain; the glance of His eye when He reproves obstinate sinners is the index of a true, noble, and reasonable anger; and it is a true and royal love which turns His look on the Galilean fishermen, on the little children, on the young man who wants to be generous but cannot take the leap, on John at the supper, on Peter in the dawn of the day of His death.

But, thirdly, the Incarnation does not mean that within that outward form which men looked upon there were two persons, the Eternal Word and a man, living together, so to speak, under one roof. The Incarnation means a union of the two natures far more close than

¹⁰ Theologians have agreed to call our Lord's human feelings *Propassions*, in order to mark the distinction given in the text.

this. The Eternal Word took hold of, assumed, a definite and singular human nature, in such a way as to make that human nature its own. The Word was from everlasting; but the humanity had no being before the instant in which it was assumed by the Word. So that the human nature so assumed was never a human person in the sense other singular and definite human natures always must be. It had all that was necessary to make it a person; but on the very instant of its completeness as a nature the higher nature wrapped it round, and, holding it always unconsumed, made it its own. Henceforward human life and human acts were as much the acts of God the Son as creation was. The soul, the body, the senses and feelings, the muscles and limbs, of that human nature belonged to God; and although every act they did was really the act of a human nature, nevertheless every act was the paramount act of that sovereign Divinity which owned them. It was the wonder of the burning bush realised; all fire, and yet the fragile wood was never burnt away. The Godhead penetrated the man through and through. The humanity stood in the very rush of the torrent of the Godhead; it shone with God-like properties and boasted of God-like names, as far as the finite could. The humanity was a drop of vinegar that mingles with the ocean, and takes the qualities of the ocean.¹¹ The Deity was like a royal unction that fell on the humanity, anointing it 'above its fellows,' making the two one.¹² The Divinity is the fire that penetrates the iron, losing

¹¹ This is St. Gregory of Nyssa's similitude, *Cont. Eunomium*, lib. v. col. 707.

¹² St. Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat. x.* col. 831.

nothing of its own, but giving its properties to the iron.¹³ The two natures were each the nature of one and the same Person; and what each nature did the Person did; what each nature was the Person was. God was made man, and was man. A man was God. A man was the Almighty Creator; a child was the God of Heaven; a 'servant' was the 'equal' of Jehovah, and therefore Jehova. And God was born of the Virgin Mary, suffered, died, was buried, and rose again the third day. It was not the humanity which created all things; it was not the Godhead which was nailed to the cross; but the Person to whom both belonged did the one and suffered the other, and the Person was Jesus Christ.

Thus God came down upon the earth. Ever since the darkness had fallen on the world, poor fallen man had desired, with some kind of a blind desire, to see his God with his eyes. He had made images of Him—or rather of the foolish imaginings of his own heart—and fallen down before them in worship. He had looked everywhere to catch some glimpse of Him, or footprint of His path. And ever since the law was given to Moses the saints and the prophets had longed to see the day which they knew was sure to come. Humanity, represented by its best and noblest, had sighed, like the Spouse, for that supreme kiss of love and union when the heavens and the earth should come together, and frail flesh be taken up by God the Creator. And they had the answer to their long prayer when Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem.

¹³ St. Basil, *Hom. in Christi Generationem*, col. 1459.

Is the mystery of the Word made Flesh hard to take in? God alone, Who revealed it and Who wrought it, can make the heart of man accept it. Therefore, in St. Augustine's words, 'Let the mind be purified by faith, by abstinence from sin, by doing good, by prayer and longing desire, that by God's grace we may advance to intelligence and to love.'¹²

¹² *De Trinitate*, iv. cap. 21.

II.

ANTI-CHRISTS.

‘EVERY spirit,’ said John the Apostle, ‘which dissolveth Jesus Christ is not of God ; and this is Anti-Christ.’¹ These words have stood a long time, and there has never been a time when they were not true, or when they were not necessary to be insisted upon. Jesus Christ is God and Man ; and to ‘dissolve’ Jesus Christ is, either to make Him two separate persons, God and a Man, or to separate from His personality one of His natures—either that Divine Nature which He has from all ages, or that human one which He took to Himself in time. The men who have done this are the Anti-Christes of the world’s history. They began to speculate and teach before the New Testament was complete. They aggravated the troubles of the Church in the days of the heathen persecutions. They were the chief occasion of her first great Council. They disturbed the times of her early triumph, and desolated wide territories that she had once called her own. In the religious convulsions of later times they have always hovered near, and now, in the days in which we are, they are an army, and they have a discipline, and it would seem as if they were the advanced guard of the

¹ 1 John iv. 3.

great and final Anti-Christ, whose fatal triumph it will be, for a brief space, to drive the worship and the love of Jesus from the earth. It will be our object in the remarks which follow to make use of the 'contradictions' of gainsayers in order to grasp more firmly what the Incarnation is.

The Christian Church calls the Incarnation a Mystery, and a Mystery it is. But for all that, it is right for us to look at it closely and to argue about it, even if only because men have disputed it and denied it. A Mystery cannot be adequately comprehended; but it can be got hold of by the mind up to a certain point—how far, no one knows, least of all those who obstinately shut their eyes. First of all, you can generally see pretty plainly that the fact which constitutes the Mystery is no impossibility. Then, you can prove the fact, at least, by external evidence; that is, by God's word. Thirdly, you can often show such fitness, beauty, and divine wisdom in those truths which Christianity calls Mysteries, that it would almost seem that if they were not true they ought to be; just as the astronomer, ranging the heavens with his glass, notes a series of motions which tell him there is an undetected planet not far off; and he looks more warily, and, behold, it is there. And lastly, you may at least, with God's help, strip the Mystery of all the darkness in which human reason has wrapped it up; you can dissipate error, remove prejudice, and show up false reasoning; and if you gain nothing else, it will be great gain merely to be able to put your finger on the exact point in which the heart of the Mystery lies.

The very point of the Mystery of the Incarnation is contained in the formula in which it is stated by the great Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. It is this—that God the Word made the human nature (in Christ) *His very own*. He assumed, He took up, Humanity into so close an embrace that the human nature was *His nature*. Let the words be weighed. There are many conceivable ways in which God dwells, or may dwell, in man. When He pours upon man's soul the gifts of sanctifying Grace, Charity, the gifts of the Spirit, He then is said to 'dwell'³ or to 'remain'³ in that soul, or to be 'given'⁴ to it. When the human heart and the will of the Creator are in such complete harmony that the man loves, aspires to, and pursues only what the Creator's law ordains, then there is a close union between God and man; and this union is so much the more close in proportion as the supernatural moving power of Grace sweetly constrains the heart and all the powers of the human soul. This may be called a 'moral' union between God and man. Thus God dwells in His Saints. And sometimes there is a more energetic and forceful stress laid upon the creature by its Maker, and in certain acts, for a time, the human nature is the organ and the instrument of the Deity. This occurs in the phenomena of inspiration and of miracles wrought by men.

But the union of God and Man in Jesus Christ is not adequately explained by any of these ways of explanation. It is more than a union by participation of graces or gifts. It is true, indeed, as David sung,

³ John vi. 57.

³ Rom. viii. 13.

⁴ Rom. v. 5.

that all the gifts and graces of God were poured forth upon that Sacred Humanity. In the forty-fourth Psalm, the King that is to come is declared to be 'beautiful above the sons of men,' grace on His lips, comely and majestic, full of truth and meekness and justice. But this unction of grace is a different anointing from that which falls to the lot of ordinary Saints. 'He hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness *above Thy fellows.*'⁵ Christ the Anointed, the 'fellow' of mortal men, because a mortal man Himself, was to have upon Him the unction of Heaven's gift in a way that was all His own. And it was not to be merely that, as man, He was to do God's will and worship Him with all His thought and life. He was not merely to be the obedient and willing instrument of God. This would have made Christ two Persons, and would have brought to nought the whole scheme of Redemption. It was necessary that the same Person who said, 'I and the Father are One,' should be able to say, 'I thirst.' The Word was made Flesh, and in becoming so, He made a certain human nature His *very own* for ever.

The historic attempts to 'dissolve' Jesus Christ have been, as I need not say, attempts, more or less wilfully erroneous, to misstate the truth of the union of His Godhead and His Manhood. They may be classed under three chief heads, the Arian, the Nestorian, and the Socinian.

1. The Arian heresy is completely a thing of the past. It would be as easy now to find a Stoic or a Cynic as to meet with a real Arian. And yet Arianism was once a

⁵ Ps xliv. 8.

very large and troublesome fact. The idea of Arius was, that God the Son was not really the God of heaven and earth, but some kind of inferior God; and this inferior God became man. Arius came from Alexandria; and in Alexandria, ever since St. Mark had brought thither the Christian Faith, there had been going on discussions as to the Trinity in the Godhead, as to the Word of God, and concerning the way in which emanation from the Deity was possible. The Church of Alexandria—that is, the chief pastor and the simple people—always believed the simple Catholic Faith, that the Word was made Flesh, and the Word was God. But Alexandria was a centre of Pagan thought. Eastern theories about emanation encountered Platonic notions about the Logos; and the result was endless discussion, and constant attempts to substitute the views of the day and the hour for the legitimate development of Christian belief. The notion of an inferior Deity emanating from God, and whose office it was to create the world, was a common one in ancient religions; and it is an indication of a primitive revelation of the Trinity. Arius took it up, and said that Jesus Christ was this inferior God incarnate. The error spread very widely, partly through political causes, and partly because it seemed ‘rational’ and more easy to take in than the complete doctrine of the Trinity. But if it had prevailed, three consequences would soon have followed—first, the utter impossibility of reconciling the language of the Bible; secondly, a flood of superstition, in order to explain the place and attributes of this inferior God; and thirdly, the disap-

pearance of the Church, the Sacraments, and the system of Grace, together with the 'worship' of Jesus Christ; for Grace and Sacraments are efficacious by His Blood, and if His Blood is not the Blood of the Eternal God, it cannot be the source of Life, the laver of regeneration, or the means of sanctification. Arianism has died out—first of all, because all heresies must die, just as a broken branch, that looks green for an hour or two, rapidly withers and rots into new substances: but secondly, because it combines all the difficulties of an Anti-Christian heresy with the other difficulties of a highly superrational and mystical theory of its own. As the world went on, men who tried to 'dissolve' Jesus Christ found how to do it in a less troublesome way. There have been a few Arians in comparatively recent times. John Milton seems to have found in Arianism an answer to those difficulties which a powerful imagination destitute of the light of Faith is sure to find in the Trinity; and Isaac Newton, whose fancy travelled as far as Milton's in the fields he made his own, and whose natural piety of heart did not make up for the want of supernatural discernment, thought that he too could agree better with Arius than with Athanasius. But the men who were sometimes called Arians, some hundred years ago in England, were only Socinians.

2. The heresy of Nestorius, which was quite another sort of heresy from that of Arius, divided Jesus Christ into two complete persons. Nestorius, when he began to preach heresy, was a man of the highest possible consideration, patriarch of Constantinople, an intimate

friend of the Emperor Theodosius II., a great preacher, and a man of extraordinary personal asceticism. When he told one of those immense audiences that used to assemble to hear him on great feasts, that it was questionable whether the Blessed Virgin Mary could be called the Mother of God, he raised a tempest which it took many a year to allay. It was soon evident what he meant. He considered that the man who was born of Mary was only the outward covering (so to speak) of the Godhead. God, in some sense, dwelt in Jesus Christ; He was 'united' to him; Christ 'bore' the Deity about with him. But the actions of the one were not the actions of the other; it could not be said that God was born, suffered, died. The God and the man were two distinct persons; partners and brothers, in a sense, but two. This is Nestorianism, and it is dead now, like Arianism. St. Cyril of Alexandria was its great destroyer. Nestorius was as shifty as a Syrian with a bad cause could be; he allowed almost any term which the Catholic Fathers proposed, including even that of Mother of God. But St. Cyril never let him go, and he was condemned at the fourth General Council, that of Ephesus, A.D. 431. The great point on which St. Cyril insisted, as I have already said, was, that the Word made the human nature its *very own*. He repeats this grand fundamental point over and over again. So that Jesus Christ was not two persons, but one Person having two natures; by the one creating the heavens and the earth, by the other born of the Virgin Mary, and shedding His Blood for man's redemption.

3. But Nestorianism, like Arianism, is no longer of

any account in the world of religious thought. One hears the name, and one is interested to know what it meant; and the mention of it revives old pictures of bygone times and departed races; of times when Christianity struggled with the fragments of Eastern mysticism and Greek subtlety, as a vessel struggles with floating ice in the short summer of a Polar sea; of races who loved to speculate, and admired novelty, and firmly believed in the existence of a world they could not see. The process of disintegration of dogma has not stood still. When the great revolt took place in the sixteenth century, the leaders of the new ideas were startled by the sudden rising from the graves, where many an anathema had laid them low, of the old heresies of the fourth and fifth centuries. Socinianism, springing up and gathering its strength in North Italy and in Eastern Europe, before long confronted Luther at Wittenberg, and Calvin at Geneva. The men who were laying the axe to the root of God's Revelation were not prepared for the abomination of desolation which began by denying the Trinity and the Incarnation. Nearly all the early chiefs of the Socinian or Unitarian sects were put to violent deaths. Luther drove Muncer out of Wittenberg, and urged on the war which resulted in his death. Hetzer was executed at Constance; Campano died in prison; Gentilis was beheaded at Naples, and Servetus burnt at Geneva. Lælius and Faustus Socinus, who gave Socinianism its name, died in obscurity. And so the evil seemed for a time to be checked. But it was only checked in the fashion that the mythological hero destroyed the hydra;

for every head that the sword cut off, in a very brief space there grew out two more. Unitarianism, as a sect, is not widely spread in England, though, in proportion to its numbers, it is strong; in America its adherents are somewhat more numerous, and much more influential. But its extent is not by any means to be measured by the names of those who care to call themselves Unitarians. The truth is, the Unitarian view of the Incarnation is held, either consciously or unconsciously, by multitudes who belong to Churches which profess belief in the Trinity, and prescribe prayer to Jesus Christ. The essence of Unitarianism is the denial of all mystery and of all revelation proper. It believes in God, but not in a Trinity. It believes in Jesus Christ, but not in His Divinity. It believes in Christianity, but not in its supernatural character, or its finality, or its perfectness as a guide to man's steps, and an answer to his aspirations. Jesus Christ is a man, and nothing more. He is a great man, a holy and wise man, a perfect man. You may call Him in some sense God; you may even direct your prayer to Him; but He is a man, and not greater than man. All fine-spun talk about 'inferior Gods,' and duality of person, and indwelling of God, is now dispensed with. Unitarianism suits very well a generation which inherits only what past centuries of denial and rejection have still left; a generation which, unless it breaks with the primary principle of private judgment, must reduce all revelation to what its own reason can ascertain. The number of those who find it difficult to pray to Jesus Christ is growing every year. And these are

they who 'dissolve' Christ in these days, and who would be called by St. John nothing else but Anti-Christ.

Such are, in brief, the principal ways in which the doctrine of the Incarnation is denied and contradicted. Let me now try to do a difficult thing—to explain in some way the *How* of the Incarnation; and this for the twofold purpose of clearing up the doctrine itself by its own light, and of showing the shallowness of the objections brought against it.

At the present day, as, indeed, in days gone by, difficulties about the Incarnation generally imply difficulties about the Trinity. If men do not believe in the existence of God the Son, there is no question possible as to their admitting His Incarnation. Now, to prove, to explain, and to enforce a belief in the great mystery of the Trinity would take me altogether out of my course. But I believe that there exists a large number of people who stumble at the Incarnation for reasons quite independent of any doubts as to the Trinity. They perceive that, by the terms of the mystery, the Eternal God becomes Man. And they stop at this. Is it possible? A thing cannot both be and not be at the same moment. How, then, is it possible that the Infinite can be finite, that the Everlasting can have a beginning, that the Almighty should be weak, that the All-blessed should suffer? Can time, space, material conditions, and local limits ever be predicated of the Absolute? Is there not here a simple contradiction in terms?

The answer, though a good answer, does not quite satisfy such questioners as these. The answer is, that

although in Jesus Christ there is only One Person, yet still the two Natures—the Godhead and the Manhood—remain integral and undestroyed; the Godhead, because it cannot be even infinitesimally affected by vicissitude or change; the Manhood, because it was necessary for God's purposes. Hence, although it can be truly said that the Eternal was a little Child, yet it cannot be said that the Divinity became Humanity. It is right to assert that the Creator was in want and suffering; but wrong to say that God's Omnipotence was changed into weakness. The truth is, that by the Incarnation two sets of apparently incompatible properties can be predicated of One Person, because He is a Person who possesses, as His very own, each of the two Natures to which these properties respectively belong; but it does not follow that by the Incarnation these two Natures or their properties can be predicated in an abstract way of one another.

But, as I have admitted, this answer does not go sufficiently to the root of the matter to satisfy modern inquirers. The difficulty, they still insist, lies deeper. It lies in the very fact of the union of the two Natures of God and man. Take St. John's phrase as it stands, and the simple man's first question is, How can God the Word be made Flesh? Take the formulary of St. Cyril, that the Word made the Human Nature *its very own*, and the phrase seems to cover an impossibility. There is such a thing as God's moving a man, or inspiring him, or pouring His light and grace upon him, or defending him, or making him His child; but how can He make a particular humanity His own?

Let me at once protest here that we are not bound to explain this How ; and, indeed, that it cannot be adequately explained. For purposes of religion and worship, and union with God, the Incarnation is sufficiently formulated by statements, which are at least perfectly intelligible when taken one by one. Jesus is the Word ; Jesus is God ; Jesus gave Himself for us, suffered and was buried, and will come to be our Judge. These are statements that the heart must cling to. And if the mind wants more, or wants all its questions answered, it must be reminded that all these propositions can be proved one by one ; and being proved, the difficulty in reconciling them is no reason for doubting them, since the difficulty never amounts to a demonstrable contradiction. There are numbers of things that we know to be true, but which we cannot reconcile one with another.

But, after all, the mystery of the Incarnation, though dark, is dark by sheer depth, and not by want of light on the surface. It is obscure, not like some minute handwriting which a purblind man pores over and cannot read, but as the paths of the mighty stars are obscure, which defy the steadiest gazing of the wisest ; which man, armed with nobler instruments year by year, scrutinises slowly and successfully—slowly, because all he can discover is so little to what remains beyond ; successfully, because he comes to know mighty and staggering secrets which seem to lift him from the earth. Thus it is with all mysteries ; they are unfathomable, and for that very reason all the keenest intuition of all the purest souls will go on to the end, seeing farther into them and learning more of what

they are. We might turn round upon these raisers of doubts. We might say, The Scriptures and the living voice of the Church assert the fact of the Incarnation; and why should it be impossible? Who can place a limit to the power of God? The fact of Creation is not a thing that a Theist can doubt about; yet there are just such intrinsic difficulties about Creation as would make questioners deny its possibility. You do not know what God can do until He has done it. You cannot determine beforehand what the Omnipotent can effect if He will. Earth and air, water and elemental fire, are weak powers and narrow energies compared to God; and if you cannot predict the earthquake, or foretell the track of the storm, or provide against the thunderbolt, can you not understand that the Eternal and the Absolute is outside of human augury, and that when He stirs within the circle of His creation, His creatures may often have to wonder and be silent? 'Who hath wrought and done these things? . . . I, Jehova, I am the First and Last. The islands saw and feared, the ends of the earth were astonished.'⁶ That God should so descend upon a human nature, flood it, penetrate it through, as to make it His own, is surely not so far beyond belief as to be rejected at first sight. God made human nature, and He upholds it; and He knows each secret spring of its life and motion. He cannot change one iota Himself; but He can take possession of His creature. And what is this human nature of ours that men pretend to be so incompatible with the Deity? The humanity of Jesus—the humanity as-

⁶ Isaiah xli. 4, 5.

sumed by the Word—was body and soul like ourselves. What is the body? What is this mortal frame, which grows with our growth and which we seem to leave behind us when the end comes? What is material substance? Suppose that matter is merely energy or force. Many philosophers, Catholic and non-Catholic, hold that earth and air and flesh and other material things are combinations of some simple form of energy, such as we can realise by the idea of electricity. It is certain that this is quite possible. But whether it is true or not, we have to realise that material substance—the human frame, for instance—is not the gross, impervious, stubborn stuff which mere imagination teaches us to picture it; but is a complex system of such wondrous subtlety, full of such multitudinous minute interstices, ready for such numberless combinations, that the most ethereal fire of the spheres above is not really more elastic or more impressionable. By what intimate and most subtle operation could not the Godhead descend on such a creature as this? But this was not the man, and the Godhead did directly not assume this. The man is chiefly the soul; and the soul is a spiritual essence. Spirit differs from matter. How it differs it may be hard exactly to define. But it must differ, because its action and operation are so different. If matter is energy, it is an energy that has no return upon itself, no reflection to the centre whence it rises. But the spiritual Energy is Thought—and the condition of all thought is the idea of Self—and the idea of Self supposes a completely reflex act. And in this at least lies the difference be-

tween Matter and Spirit. And Matter and Spirit mingle in each of us! Questioners might say, even here, How can this be possible? How can the spiritual soul mingle with the unreflective matter? What bond can there be between Thought and Extension? But we know that the bond exists; for we are affected by the modes that material things have, and at the same time we think, and it is the same we of whom both these things are true. There is this mystery in Humanity itself. Yet with our actual experience it does not seem unnatural to us that the higher energy, the soul, should permeate and possess the lower, and make it its own. Passing, then, from little things to great, from a shadow to a grand reality, we surely can catch some glimpse of how the Divine Nature can possess the Human? God is Energy in all its modes and forms—not collectively, but virtually and preëminently. He is one simple Being—one simple Act; but in that simplicity is virtually every being and every energy that exists. When the soul thinks and works, it thinks and works because God exists, and by His active power. When the brain forms its varied pictures, and calls up in reminiscence the impressions it has once received, He is the secret of its action and its sensibility. When the unresting nerves thrill their messages to the brain, and bring back the will's sovereign commands to muscle and to limb, and when the frame of man responds with various outward and inward movement to the emotions of soul and sense, still the deepest and primeval mover of all is the Maker, of whom His Prophet so significantly says that 'He knoweth our frame.' Yes, He knows it; for He

is present to its inmost marrow with a living and acting pressure. In the multitude of men He acts so gently and so uniformly that His action becomes a law of Nature; for nothing could exist or act without it. On others again He pours Himself in the wondrous energy of Divine Grace—an energy that none but Himself could originate or preserve. And other human frames He takes possession of, not more grandly or more wonderfully, but more sensibly: filling their understanding and their memory with hidden truths, giving them the power to see the things to come, making their tongues divinely eloquent, and their hands divinely powerful. These are the Saints, the Sages, the Seers, and the Wonder-workers of the world. But, once for all, uniquely and supremely, He had decreed from all eternity to come down upon a human nature in such a fashion that no mercy could be greater and no miracle more awful. No created intellect can ever comprehend how this was done. To comprehend it, it would first be necessary to understand completely what human nature is, what soul is, what body is; and, after that, to understand the Godhead Itself, and all the ways in which It can act in and upon a creature. But this we know—and let me be pardoned for repeating it so often—that the Godhead was not changed, that the chosen Humanity was not consumed but only perfected, and that it lay so wrapt up in the Godhead that It was henceforth God's *own* nature. That favoured Humanity had never belonged to itself. In the moment of its creation and formation it had been assumed by the Word. She who was chosen for the ministry of Its

birth into the world was truly called the Mother of God. From the moment It began to exist It was King, Priest, Prophet, and Saint. In virtue of Its ineffable union with the Word, Its soul had from the beginning that beatific vision of God face to face, which is the supernatural destiny of the children of God. Through this vision, and through the great fact of the union, It was incapable of the least shadow of sin or imperfection. Through Its consortship with the Word, It was filled with every kind of *charisma*, gift and grace; as Isaias had prophesied, 'There shall rest upon Him the Spirit of the Lord—the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel and Fortitude, the Spirit of Knowledge and Piety; and there shall fill Him the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord.'⁷ It was filled with every kind of infused virtue except such as were incompatible with Its dignity, with all knowledge, and with all the gifts of all the Saints and Prophets. It was the summit of creation, the head of all creatures, the corner-stone of all that was made, the centre of all the order of the heavens and the earth, the fountain of all grace to Angels and to men. It was adorable with true and divine adoration, not in Itself, because It never existed by Itself, and so considered is merely an abstraction and a figment of the mind; but because It exists now and for evermore as the Humanity of the Infinite Word, assumed by Him, made His own unto unity of Person, that henceforth the same Person might be God and Man.

This is the great 'mystery which hath been hidden

⁷ Isaias xi. 2, 3.

from eternity in God ;⁸ the mystery which hath been hidden from ages and generations, but now is manifested to His Saints, to whom God would make known the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ;⁹ the mystery which the Apostles first learnt from their Master, and then taught the world.¹⁰ It rests upon testimony which is unshaken, on evidence which is sure and strong, on tradition which is unbroken. If the Incarnation had not been vouchsafed to us, humanity would be inarticulately crying out for it now; and possessing it, we possess that which satisfies our longings and answers our questionings.

Man, when he raises his eyes a little from that earth on whose surface he seeks so earnestly for earthly things, feels himself wanting much for himself and much for his race. For himself, he feels that he has aspirations and capacities which seem all but infinite in their reach. He becomes conscious of sin; he is ashamed of the littleness of his daily life; he is fired with noble schemes of what he might be, if the better part of him could fairly assert itself. And the preaching of the Incarnation comes to him with the voice of Revelation; God alone can raise man up. One chosen human nature He has taken hold of, to give man confidence and to win his heart; but the gifts and the grace of that Humanity are for every soul of Adam's race. As every man is the child of the first Adam by natural descent, so every man may be born of the second Adam, by water and the Spirit, and be made capable of leading the supernatural and higher life, which destroys the

⁸ Eph. ii. 9.

⁹ Coloss. i. 26, 27.

¹⁰ 1 Cor. ii. 7.

evil self in this life in order to lead the purified soul to the vision of the life to come. And the advancement of every individual man, of which the Incarnation is the pledge, is also the advancement of the race. The more the race of man makes itself like unto Christ, the higher will it raise itself. The Humanity of Christ is the model of all Humanity. Its royalty and priesthood are the consequence of union with the Godhead. All progress is vain that does not advance towards holiness and habitual grace. All knowledge is useless that does not enable man better to understand who God is, and what himself is made for. All power is wasted that spends itself in things which do not raise men from the earth. Knowledge and power were at their acme in Jesus Christ, and He is the goal of all true progress; for in Him the First and Last, the Supreme, the Absolute, has united Himself to human nature, to show human nature what is its perfection.

To become like to Christ! This is the reality of which Pantheism is the dream. All energy is God, say the philosophers, and there is no God but universal force. We answer that all energy is virtually in God, but created energy, whilst derived from God, is not God. Yet there is One Man who has all that any of us can want, and immeasurably more. And of this Man's abundance we can all receive. And by making ourselves like to Him, we make ourselves like to God, for He is God! The individual souls of men, which make up the stream of the human race, are not mere bubbles on the ocean current; but each is a responsible self. Yet all the beauty and the grandeur of each in

the order of grace—the only order that leads to beatitude—is derived from the abundance of the grace of Jesus Christ.

There is an old commandment, summing up all that goes to make a man perfect. The word that it uses is, Love. It is this supreme work of holy love which all the grace and all the illumination which Jesus Christ brings to the world are intended to promote. But the Incarnation is more than light and grace; it is the very presence of the object. God has shown Himself to man. He has not awed him by thunder and lightning, or terrified him by fire, or struck him with wonder by mighty miracles. He has become a Man—a little Child, a weary Wanderer, a suffering Innocent; and, as He knew He would, He has found the way to man's heart. Love, in a man, is seated in the citadel of his intellectual soul; he can love God without feeling that he loves Him. But, although this is true absolutely, yet it is not true when spoken of the mass of mankind and of long continuance of the act of love. Man is a compound of a multitude of powers and faculties; and, in order that his act of love may be intense, it is necessary that all his powers of body and soul unite in it. The fragrance of a garden of summer flowers is perfect only when the sun is shining and the air is still. So the love of poor weak man is not very intense, and will not last very long, when his fancy and his heart are not moved too. And it is the Word Incarnate who ravishes the sense of the poor and simple, of the childlike and the ignorant, and makes their attraction to invisible things so intense and so

constant. They know He was like one of themselves ; they have the gospel-pictures in their hearts ; they feel that His Sacred Heart beat for them and their welfare. They read how He prayed for them, what beautiful things He said to help them, and what He went through to save them. Each scene of His childhood, His hidden life, His public ministry, and His Passion finds out some particular chord in their hearts, and sets their Love flowing afresh. And that awful Mystery of Jesus Christ's life — that He should have chosen to *suffer* when He need not have suffered, and should have stamped suffering, obedience, and poverty as the most excellent conditions of human life — this especially, whilst it answers a thousand questions of the human heart, fills it more than a thousandfold with all-necessary Love.

Has Love of God left the world ? We dare not say so. Yet the present days are cold and calculating. The eye is on the earth, and on self, and on honour, not on the heavens. Let Jesus Christ appear ! This should be our prayer for the world. Jesus Christ, God and Man, One Person, is the world's King, Humanity's summit and perfection ; and He is also the God of our heart and our portion for ever !

III.

REDEMPTION.

THOSE who believe, as we do, that Jesus Christ of Nazareth is the Eternal Word of God, believe something which must shape all their thought, and order all their life. The course and dispensation of things, which we call the world and time, must be something very different to us from what it is to those who do not believe. It is but too true that the greater number even of believers hardly live as if the Incarnation had taken place. Human frailty, ignorance, and passion sadly interfere with our realising the great Mystery of Ages, and with our understanding how its power and influence affect every region of moral and spiritual life. It will be our purpose, in this and the following Lectures, to consider what the Incarnation has done for man and man's salvation.

Why was God made man? This is a question which the Apostles and the Preachers of the Christian centuries have been answering until now; and the answer will not be finished when the trumpet of the day of doom shall summon the last preacher to hold his peace. And it is a question which naturally is often asked by those without. Inquirers, and those who are beginning to understand the enormous reach

of the formularies contained in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel and in the Nicene Creed, are sometimes staggered by the difficulty of seeing any reason why such an interposition of Omnipotence should have been called for. In trying to explain this, and to say what brought God upon the earth, we should always remember that no adequate reason can be given, just as no one can adequately explain why God chose to create the world. The Acts of the Infinite Being have no sufficient reason or cause but Himself. It is true that, since our intellect is a participated similitude of Himself, no one of His mighty acts can contradict or stultify the dictates of human reason. But the absence of contradiction (that is to say, of visible absurdity and impossibility) is a very long way from an adequate explanation. Still, as I have so often remarked, though we cannot see to the bottom of the abyss, there is more light available, and there are greater marvels discoverable, than any efforts of ours can ever exhaust.

The simple phrase of Revelation, used alike by Jesus Christ,¹ by His Prophets,² and by His Apostles,³ tells us that He came into the world 'to save' the world. This supposes that the world was in a state which required 'saving' or salvation. And we cannot understand why Christ came, or what He did, until we understand the condition of those He came to save.

To understand sin is just as difficult as to understand creation itself. Sin is only possible in a being which has reason and free-will. There is plenty of what is called evil throughout the animate and inanimate world.

¹ John iii. 17.

² Isaias lx. 16.

³ Eph. ii. 5.

But evil in irrational creatures is only their condition as things limited and imperfect by the necessity of their existence as creatures. When the reason knows evil, and the will chooses it, evil becomes sin. And sin may be truly called the only evil.

If some cherub of those who stand near the eternal throne had been vouchsafed a prophetic vision of man before man was made, he would have seen and admired a grand work of God; but if the beatified angels could feel the emotions of the earth, he would have shuddered too at the awful possibility there lay within that god-like intelligence and wondrous frame, for he would have foreseen the possibility, the probability, of sin. And when time was made, and man began to live and spread over the earth, then the destruction would have begun. As the soldiers drop on the battle-field when the deadly bolt strikes them from afar, so the souls of men would have fallen in death, frustrating the end of their existence, and choosing evil with the deliberate act of a heart which must be miserable unless it can possess the supreme Good.

But I am describing what never happened. When the angels were shown the future man, it was not man with his natural human powers and gifts they saw; for man was not to be sent into the world so. Man's soul was a creation which, by the very fact of its existence, implied many noble powers. But being what it was, a spirit, it had possibilities so indefinitely beyond its native endowments, that its Maker, for His own greater glory, chose to use it as a theatre for a series of such magnificent acts, for a dispensation of such lofty splen-

dour, that what He did was equivalent to a new creation. He willed first that its end—that is to say, the heaven or bliss which all immortal creatures must have in some shape, or be ruined—should be the vision of Himself; Himself, as seen, not by the naked power of human intellect (such as would have been its heaven had it been left to natural things), but by the power of a special light or gift, which should enable it to look upon Him ‘face to face, even as He is!’⁴ He willed, secondly, that this supernal light or gift should have its beginnings on the earth; that, as soon as man began to be, his soul should receive the earthly pledge of its heavenly state in the shape of a gift which His Revelation calls sometimes a vesture, sometimes a crown, at other times, life, or the light and gift of God; and which, in common language, we know by the name of grace. This order of grace, then, consists in four things. First, the promise and destiny of the ‘life to come,’ which is the face-to-face vision of God; secondly, the elevation of the soul by a supernatural endowment; thirdly, the continual visitation of God upon the soul by impulses of the same kind as the gift; and fourthly, the activity or works of the soul itself, which are now not mere common and natural works, but works of grace, meritorious of that supreme beatitude which is the soul’s destiny. This is the supernatural order; and this was the state and order in which God constituted man when He created him. I have described its essential features only, but sufficiently to enable us to see what it was.

For it is in this ‘supernatural order’ that we have

⁴ 1 John iii. 2.

the key of Christ's counsel, and the explanation of His coming.

The great fact of the Fall is familiar to us. By the sinful act of their first parents the race of man fell from grace. Why it was that Adam's act had such a fearful sweep in its effect is a mystery—not an absurdity or a contradiction, but an abyss full of light, had we time to stop and look into it. The human race fell; but it is necessary to note carefully what that Fall was. In the first place, the supernatural end or destiny of man still held good. But he lost that original gift, the exercise of which was to enable him to attain it. He became as the eagle whose home and nest is on a peak of the Andes, and whom the trapper snares and maims until his mighty pinions will carry him no more. Every human being, when he entered this world, entered it (and enters it now) stripped of grace, and wounded and weak even in his natural powers. He was ruined; and ruined the worse because he might have been so grand a work of God! It had been better for him had he never been raised so high. God's image was in him by the very fact that he had a spiritual and immortal soul; it was in him far more brightly and excellently by supernatural grace; and when he fell from grace, the blight that came over the beauty of his soul, while it turned the supernatural likeness into hideous deformity, touched even the natural image, and man fell lower from his height than he would have stood had he never known the order of grace. Henceforth he could do no work capable of meriting the life to come. Henceforth the life to come was out of his reach. The best that

could befall him now was to grow no worse, to do no actual sin, and then to die and be gathered into some lower region of God's infinite mercy, and there be negatively happy, perhaps, as not knowing the prize which he had lost. But would this have come to pass? Would man, weak and passion-driven, have done no actual sin? Alas, this would have been impossible! And so it would have happened that all the race of Adam would have doomed themselves to eternal pain, except the unconscious infant who could not sin in act, and therefore would not have been punished for actual sin. This is what is meant by the Fall, as it regards the state and condition of man.

But there is another side to it even more miserable to think of. Man's destiny was closest union with his Creator. His earthly preparation was to be the nearest and dearest communion—grace, heavenly charity, flowing straight from a Father's love. The Fall made the former impossible, and what did it substitute for the latter? It brought guilt, estrangement, debt. The Father's love ceased to flow, and the heavens became dark. The child of God became a child of wrath. The acceptable and dearly-loved creature was changed to a criminal, whose punishment was to languish in the winter and the storm which necessarily ensued when the ray of heavenly complacency—itsself unchanging and unchanged—no longer reached the soul that needed it so sorely. And how was man to wash away this guilt, to abolish this estrangement, to win back the forfeited love of his God?

Is there any other evil thing which follows from the

Fall? Yes, there is another. Fallen man still belongs to God. But in his sin and his guilt God cannot love him as His child; yet His hand must hold him. God gave him grace by no ministering angel, but immediately, personally. He holds him, now that he has sinned, by ministers of wrath. There are spirits of evil who had *their* trial once, and fell to rise no more. These have a dark work to do now, above the earth and below it. The fallen world is ruled by them, for they have mysterious power over the hearts and souls of unregenerate man. The kingdom of death is theirs, especially that never-ending death which essentially lies in the deprivation of the sight of God. And they rule the pit below, where wilful, obstinate sin, unrepented, dwells in fires of its own lighting—necessary pain of immortal spirits which have cut themselves off from their only happiness. And so fallen man becomes the slave of the Devil, to be tempted in life, to be punished after death.⁵

It was from such a state as this that man had to be *saved*. It was the state of the human race. And if we add nothing concerning the varied and numberless personal sins which each individual being, as he lived his day upon the earth, was sure to add to the sin of his origin, it is because we should merely have to deepen the colours and to draw the lines longer out. The fruit of the tree of Death is like the root and the trunk.

God is almighty. In His sight Sin and Death and the Devil are of no more avail to resist Him than was

⁵ Princeps mundi, præpositus mortis, operis mali persuasor, supplicii exactor. Augustinus in Ps. clxii. n. 8.

that primeval unsubstantial Nothing out of which He drew the worlds. He could have 'saved' man by a single act of His sovereign Will. He could have accepted any satisfaction or no satisfaction at all. But this was certain—that whatever He might will or accept, His fallen creatures could not themselves satisfy Him to the full measure of their debt. Their debt was beyond the power of human or angelic effort to pay. It was a debt of treason against God. This is what sin is. It involves a turning away of the creature from the Creator—or, as we might say, it means that the creature turns his back in contempt on the God who made him, and who holds him in His hand! Now, no created thing could rigorously satisfy for this. God might, of course, dispense with satisfaction, and take back His sinful child, repentant, to His bosom. But, as far as we can see, and on all principles of human calculation, that offence has a kind of infinitude about it. It is infinite, because its tendency, aim, and object is the *destruction* of the Infinite! To strike against universal order in its least manifestation is a wrong; to strike against those greater ordinances on which the universe is hinged is a greater wrong; and to strike against the Absolute, the Eternal, the First and Last, without Whom is nothing, from Whom are all things, Whose claims are utter worship, unrestricted homage, unreserved love—this is surely a wrong which, if it fall short of infinitude, only does so by the impotence of the arm that strikes, not by the moderation of the consummation aimed at. And therefore it is a wrong which cannot be redressed. If all men and all angels, and

unimagined worlds of reasonable beings, should all unite in contrition and in love, the incense of that universal sacrifice would never reach Infinitude; as the smoke of a mighty fire, kindled as a beacon on the highest hill, would mount into the air and be dissipated a million miles below the shining stars. As a man may, if he please, throw himself over a precipice, but cannot climb its scarped face back again, so man can turn from his God, and place the span of immeasurable wrong between God and himself; but, build as he may and climb as he may, he cannot touch again the serene heights from which he fell.

O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! When things are at their worst, then the Supreme Disposer finds His opportunity. 'The land hath mourned and languished; Libanus is confounded, Saron is become as a desert; Basan and Carmel are shaken; now will I rise up, saith the Lord!'⁶

What men call justice is, as far as we can see, always a law of God's providence. The reason of man approves of justice and condemns injustice, and it is impossible therefore that God Himself does not do so; although it is not true that man can always rightly decide what is just and what is unjust. The wisdom of the Uncreated therefore, viewing the whole scheme of things, not from a point on the earth, but from the unclouded heights of the firmament of His own over-ruling insight, saw that it was better—or rather, we ought to say, saw that it was *good*—that man should pay his debt, and not be simply pardoned; that he should make

⁶ *Isaias xxxiii.* 9, 10.

reparation to the full, and not receive his birthright back unless he bought it. And from all ages the whole Divine plan lay ready in the resources of Omnipotence. There was to come a Man; and that Man was to be such a one as to be able to pay the infinite price—to scale the infinite height—to win back the inaccessible prize. He was to satisfy God's justice *to the full!* He was to be a Man; yet not a mere Man. 'No (simple) brother shall redeem; (yet) a man shall redeem.'⁷ The Redeemer was to be God Himself—made Man! And when that Man, coming into the world a little child, breathed the first prayer of adoration from the depth of His human soul, that brief act, even by itself, was a sufficient reparation for all the infinite outrage which the great original crime and the unmeasured sins of generations had wrought upon the majesty of God. For that act was the act of the Infinite Himself! . . . This is what God designed in the Incarnation of the Word.

And yet (it may here occur to us) there was still a more profound sense in which the All-Wise desired to 'fulfil all justice' in the great dispensation. Suppose that sin had never been. Suppose that man, born in grace, had used all his faculties, from his birth and through his life, to worship and love his Maker and Last End. Suppose that man's life had been all good, and not only good, but supernatural in its goodness. What would all the works of man amount to? If there are beings in distant starry worlds who can note the dim light of this earth of ours,

⁷ Ps. xlviii. 8.

yet all their gazing will never let them know the great things that man builds and boasts of; the towers and spires and pyramids man thinks so great will not roughen to them the smooth and shining disc which moves so noiselessly in space. Grace is a mighty engine of grand deeds; but even a deed of Grace, and all the works of Grace piled up in Babel-towers, are only creature-acts, and therefore farther from God than our poor calculations can reckon, 'because infinitely far. Yet, in some sense, God's creatures owe Him an adoration which shall be *worthy* of Himself. David, as he wandered in rocky wildernesses in the times of storms and floods, heard 'deep calling to deep'⁸ with awful voice. To be a 'creature' is to be a great abyss; a 'deep,' with a persistent mighty cry; and the cry is one of huge impotence, to render to the Maker any return worthy of that sovereign creative act by which the creature has its being. The abyss of nothingness cries out everlastingly to the abyss of All-Existence: What shall I give back to the Lord for all He hath given unto me? The cry has gone forth in every tongue used by reasoning man through all the ages. And such efforts as they were capable of they made from time to time, to give some return to God; prayer, oblation, penance, sacrifice. And the cry was not, after all, the voice of mere despair; hope was heard in it as well. For all nations, and chiefly the chosen race who knew the living God, knew and felt that, although their own efforts were nothingness, yet One was coming Whose worship would be worthy. 'Sacrifice and obla-

⁸. Ps. xli. 8.

tion Thou wouldst not ;' they were unworthy ; ' then I said, Behold I come.⁹ And when He came, then, for the first time since human nature had existed, a human act of worship rose to the eternal Throne, fully worthy of the Godhead. . . This, again, is what God designed in the Incarnation of the Word. There are the holy and the learned who speculate, and say, that even if the world had done no sin, still the Word would have taken flesh, for man's love, and to offer to God a homage worthy of His Majesty.

It is with these thoughts uppermost in our mind that we should read the details in the Gospel of the life and Passion of Jesus Christ. The mere fact that the Word was made Flesh, and that, so Incarnate, He offered up to the Father the least of His acts or thoughts, was enough, as we have seen, to satisfy God's justice for sin, and also to render to God a worship worthy of Himself. But, as you know, the actual Redemption was wrought out, not by one act, but by many. Redemption was given to man by a life of painful work, tending to, and ending in, a great Sacrifice.

The world knew what Sacrifice meant long before the coming of the great High-priest. The sense of sin, or the sense of dependence, had kept alive the light of the primitive revelation, and all nations, cultured and barbarous alike, used sacrifice in this shape or in that. Sometimes it was the offering and destruction of the fruits of the earth and of the food that supported the life of man. More frequently it was the destruction of animal life—the shedding of blood ; and there were

⁹ Ps. xlix. 7.

peoples, and are now, which offer in detestable rites of superstition the blood of their own fellow-creatures. An act of sacrifice meant worship; it expresses dependence, supplication, thanksgiving. Man, recognising that he belonged to God, took some one of God's creatures, and, substituting it for himself, destroyed it, in symbolical acknowledgment of what he owed himself. He destroyed it, or so changed it that the change was equivalent to a destruction; he slew animals, pouring out their blood, or burning them with fire that the smoke might mount to the heavens; he took bread and left it till the elements decayed it; he took wine and poured it out upon the earth. For all sacrifice requires this destruction or change of the victim; it is offered as an acknowledgment of supreme dominion, to no other than the Lord of life and death. For all the thousands of years before the Incarnation the heathen offered his sacrifices, knowing not what he really did; for all the years of the Old Covenant the axe fell, and the blood reddened the ground, and the altars smoked, and the Prophets cried out for the time when the 'Sacrifice of Justice' should be accepted,¹⁰ and the clean oblation offered from the rising to the setting of the sun.¹¹ A Man came Who was to offer Himself. He was well-fitted to substitute Himself for the human race. He was their real and lawful Head, by virtue of the awful dignity of His Person—He was Adam in the new order of justifying grace. He was the natural Mediator between God and Man—being Himself both God and Man. And it was the eternal counsel, backed loyally

¹⁰ Ps. l. 21.¹¹ Malachy i. 2.

by His own human will, that the sins of all should be laid upon Him, as the Priest of old laid his hands on the head of the emissary goat ; that He should be made 'sin' and 'a curse' for us ; and that He should be the price and ransom of our lost souls. It was not that God punished the innocent for the guilty. God inspired the human will of Jesus Christ to take on Himself the great Priesthood, and to become the great Victim of propitiation. And He entered the world for that very end. The Cross stood up before Him, at the end of a vista of bitter things. He walked to meet it, as a soldier marches to victory. His victory was to be His death. He was Priest by the unction of the Divinity. He was Victim because He willed it. And laying His life down on the wood of the Cross, He accomplished a Sacrifice which left no jot or tittle of the claims of Justice unsatisfied.

Just as the Incarnation of the Word of God is the central stone of Christianity, so the shedding of the blood of the Incarnate Word is the culminating point of the Incarnation. Consider what it was. It was not the mere out-pouring of blood from the veins of a Man ; it was the suffering and the death which accompanied that blood-shedding ; it was the whole pain of nerve and heart and soul of which it was the outward manifestation. But it was much more even than this ; it was the *acceptance* and *offering* of all this by a free human will. Blood-shedding, pain, sorrow, are nothing meritorious in themselves ; it is the rational choice and acceptance of them, through grace, that makes them pleasing to God ; for all worship and service of God

must be first of all a free act of the heart and soul, deliberately intended or accepted. 'He was offered because He willed it,'¹² says the Prophet in that sombre and plaintive chapter in which he paints the Man of Sorrows eight hundred years before He came. And this act of the human rational will, elevated to infinite worthiness by the personal union of the Godhead, was what redeemed the world. This is what is signified by the symbol of the Holy Cross. The Cross of Calvary once grew in an eastern forest, and the axe of the woodman cut it down and shaped it. It was fashioned into an instrument for executing criminals—the worst kind of gallows that the world then knew. The beams of it were borne to the accursed spot outside the gate, and they were laid across one another among the skulls and the graves of Calvary. And a Man was laid upon it, and the cruel nails were driven through His hands and through His feet; and then it rose into the air, the Victim hanging to it, the red streams staining it; and from that moment forth the world knew only one Cross, the Holy Cross of Jesus Christ. It stood three days, and then it fell upon the ground, and men lost sight of it—but found it again and treasured it. But to the world, to the soul, to history, it still stands upon Calvary, whilst its image is multiplied over all lands. The Spirit sent its Preachers over the world; they were to preach 'Jesus, and Him crucified.'¹³ Men signed its sign upon their foreheads and their hearts. It stood high up on tower and lofty column, on basilica of the Empire, on minster and cathedral of the West. Kings

¹² *Isaias* liii. 7.¹³ *1 Cor.* ii. 2.

wore it in their crowns, and poor men kissed it where it hung in churches, or knelt to it where it rose by the wayside. It was the text to beat down the pride of this world, and to cheer men's sorrow and transform their suffering into joyful imitation. For by it, and by what it signified, men knew God had taken away the sin of the world. The Heaven of bliss was opened again. The grace of supernatural life was ready. There was remedy for frailty, for passion, for temptation. And the Father of All once more looked with complacency upon the world of men's souls. They were again His children, the heirs to His bliss, partakers of His nature.¹⁴ And the enemy of mankind, the dread servant of necessary wrath, to whom man must fall if he flings himself down the steep of perdition—the Evil Spirit was held in, that he should no longer hurt. Man had, in a certain sense, been his, by free consent; but the Blood of Christ had ransomed him. For, after all, it was as the minister of serene Almighty Justice that the Devil held his power upon the soul of man. Where deadly sin is, there the Evil One is allowed to dwell and call that soul his own. Let sin vanish, and as the birds of night fly when the sun appears, so the Devil's time is up, and he must flee away.

The Creator's justice satisfied, man's guilt washed away, Heaven opened, grace purchased, and hell conquered—these are the fruits of the Incarnation, and especially of the death, of Jesus Christ. The eclipse passed away from the earth. The dark shadow, the deadly chill, the ghastliness and horror—they passed,

¹⁴ 1 Peter i. 5.

and the 'Brightness of eternal Light' shone upon the redeemed world.

And when we have said all this, it seems to me we have not even come near the full explanation of what Redemption is. We have spoken of Justice and Satisfaction and Remission. We have hardly mentioned one other word, which yet says more than all else that could be said. John the Apostle, rapt in the visions of Patmos, knew better what Redemption was when he spoke in rapture of Jesus Christ, 'Prince of the kings of the earth, *Who hath loved us* and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.'¹⁵ Paul the Preacher knew it, when he cried out, 'I live in the faith of the Son of God, *Who loved me* and gave Himself for me.'¹⁶ And when Peter, speaking to the Churches concerning their Saviour, said, 'Whom having not seen *you love*,'¹⁷ He lets us know in that word how the heart of man should think and speak of salvation. Just as Creation can only be explained by Love, so must we say of the Incarnation. The Infinite—Who is utterly infinite, and absolutely beyond all want, or need, or affinity, or relation to anything outside Himself—nevertheless created a universe of creatures and pronounced them good. The complacency of His measureless Love, traversing the mighty spaces between Himself and His creation, rested in some mysterious way on the things He had made. Loving all the works of His hands, yet He loved rational beings with the love of person to person, so that man was capable of being His friend, and, by grace, His especial child. Most men do not reflect

¹⁵ Apoc. i. 5.

¹⁶ Gal. ii. 20.

¹⁷ 1 Peter i. 8.

much on this; but if they did they would see that of all mysteries this is perhaps the most inexplicable—that the Infinite can love a finite creature. And if Love was wonderful in Creation, it is still more wonderful in Reparation. It is the work of a Person on behalf of persons—of Jesus on behalf of you and of me! It is a work of immense power and stupendous interposition—but it is not a mechanical contrivance. It is a Divine plan—but the plan of a dear friend to save one whom he loves even too well. The infinite boon of eternal life He does not fling to us as if He condescended to us; but He seems to step from His throne and to come to the door of the Heavens, and to lead us with imperial hand as honoured guests through His courts and His chambers until He places us in the hall of Presence, near the footstool of His eternal throne. The saving of our souls is a work He does with His own hands. It is not a ministry that He directs—not a message that He sends—not an alms that He throws to us; it is a rite, a ceremony, a grand and solemn pageant, in which He Himself is the chief and foremost figure. It is a princely negotiation which He concludes with treasure coined in the treasury of His own Sacred Heart. ‘Not with corruptible things were ye redeemed—with gold or with silver—but with the precious blood as of an immaculate Lamb.’¹⁸ The heavenly Father does not send a servant out to greet the returning Prodigal. Ah! He has looked and longed for him Himself; and when He catches sign of the poor broken creature on the road afar off, He hastens down to meet him, and not before

¹⁸ 1 Peter i. 19.

He has fallen on his neck and kissed him does He put the vesture of grace upon him or kill the fatted calf. 'Dilexit et lavit !' It was the Love of the Sacred Heart which wrought the Redemption.

And if the love of Jesus Christ for us is the first element in His work for the world, reciprocally, our love for Him is what He intended chiefly to win. Remission of sin means Grace, and Grace, as we shall see in the following Lecture, lives in our hearts by active Love ; so that Redemption means Love or Charity, and by Love or Charity it becomes ours. Now Love was always the first and greatest commandment. As such it was rendered possible (in a higher sense) and easy (in every sense) by the Incarnation. But the Incarnation seems to have done more than this. Has it not, in some degree, even changed the character of man's love for God ? Let us recall the figure of Jesus Christ, and remember that 'this Man is God ;' and then it will not be difficult to understand how the Incarnation has brought a new softness and a human character to man's relations with the Infinite. 'Great is the mystery of piety ; God is manifest in the Flesh.'¹⁹ That human figure was meant to speak to your hearts. It is a saying of St. Alphonsus Liguori—that Saint whose sayings seem especially meant to teach the present self-sufficient age the simplicity of the true Gospel spirit—that the coming of God in the Flesh is meant to make mankind love God not only with the love of *appreciation*, but with the love of *tenderness*. Thenceforward the love of the soul for its God was to be not merely an acknow-

¹⁹ 1 Tim. iii. 16.

ledgment of God's majesty, nor a preference of Him before all other things whatsoever; but it was to be also that spontaneous, warm, consuming emotion which those always feel who love with heart as well as soul; such a feeling as the mother has for her child; such an exaltation as makes the martyr forget the fire that slowly burns him to death. And the Incarnation has actually brought this about. Does not the thought of Jesus Christ—the thought of the crib and of Nazareth and of Galilee and of Calvary—fill the heart with tenderness and make the pulse beat with rapid emotion? Does not the very name of Jesus fill the soul, and even the sense, as with melody, sweetness, and light? Ask those who have thought much on these things; ask the silent cloistered hearts who have taken the right way to find out how sweet is the Lord; ask the simple and the poor, the childlike and the humble; ask the best and purest of mankind during all the Christian centuries. The human figure of Jesus Christ, with all its moving surroundings, first intensifies Divine Love, and then preserves it in its intensity. The picture of Jesus steadies the wandering thought and holds the fickle heart; it makes prayer more fervent, and intention more pure, and detachment from earthly things more easy. Thus the stern ordinance of eternal Right seems to disappear in the soft radiance of infinite Love. 'Mercy and Truth have met each other; Justice and Peace have kissed.'²⁰

The Word made Flesh, then, is the mystery of God's Love and of man's tenderness. And the deepest

²⁰ Ps. lxxxiv. 11.

hue of that many-coloured Love is the red of the Passion. The glorious Sun of the charity of Jesus Christ set in such a crimson light that the whole world was flooded with it evermore. We have to add to the mystery of His coming the deeper mystery of His suffering. Why should God have wished to *suffer* in order to redeem us? One prayer, or one drop of Precious Blood, would have satisfied the justice of eternity for ten thousand worlds. Why, then, should *He choose* to suffer, and to suffer so terribly? Was it to teach us and to leave us an example? But *why* should He have thought fit to try to induce us to suffer? What virtue is there in suffering?

Here is one of the world's lessons. It would have gone on many a year, and many a hundred years, before it found out the mystery of suffering. But the God-Man has taught it. Shall we guess why? The Holy Scriptures do not allow us to doubt that He chose to suffer through His love for us. And if it is difficult to see how what the world would call 'unnecessary' suffering is a proof of love, let us consider this: that an act of loving kindness depends for its value upon the intensity of the voluntary emotion called love, and that the emotions of love in the human heart are always enormously affected by pain and suffering. Suffering may kill love, or it may quicken it a hundredfold; but it will certainly do one or the other. All who have suffered know that it is of the nature of pain and anguish to intensify acts of the will. A man suffering a severe torture in the depths of the night will either make a wild resistance, or he will form acts of intensest,

tenderest loving resignation. A great heart cannot be moderate when it suffers. Read this in the sufferings of your Saviour. His very flesh was itself a pain. The tears of His infancy, the toils of His boyhood, the privations of His manhood, the torments of His Passion, are at once the outward proofs and the fostering causes of a prolonged series of loving acts; they show the tension that was on the Sacred Heart through all the years of its mortality, and the Divine fragrance of that continued love of us which, like the odours of the flower that is trodden by the way, is sweetest when it rises from a crushed Heart. And they teach the world the grand and necessary lesson, that love of God is the most perfect work of the human heart, and that there is nothing that can elevate, purify, and intensify love so thoroughly as suffering. 'Christ hath suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you follow His steps.'²¹

It is a curious fact that, although there never was a time when men and women were more prodigal of tenderness to created beings, such as wife, or husband, or child, or dependent, yet there never was a time when they put so little of their *heart* into the love of their God. God is hardly a Person to them; He is a part of a system; He is a Truth; He is a far-off First Cause. The world will not remember that 'the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory.'²² The proudest, richest, cleverest man amongst us all has nothing left him, when he realises that, but to kneel down and be a little child. 'I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and Earth, because Thou hast

²¹ 1 Peter ii. 21.

²² John i. 14,

hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and revealed them to little ones. Yea, Father, for so it hath seemed good in Thy sight!²³ To kneel at the crib, to kiss the crucifix, to follow the stations of the Passion, to weep for the sufferings of Jesus; it is not the wise and the prudent that know the wisdom and the prudence of this.

²³ Luke x. 21.

IV.

SANCTIFICATION

WE may thank the mercy of God that there are as yet comparatively few in this country who have accepted the destructive conclusions of extreme Rationalism, and come to look upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as a mere man, with human ignorance and human imperfection. But it is true, nevertheless, that the Rationalistic criticism which is now so common has had a great effect even on the multitudes of those who consider themselves believers. Belief which does not rest on definite teaching cannot be very steady. Those who profess that they take their religion from the Scripture alone, really take it from the preachers, the writers, the newspapers, who comment on the Scripture; and as the Scripture cannot speak and contradict those who put their own interpretations on the Scripture, it is evident that the talk of clever and plausible men will have its effect by degrees. You can hardly note when the autumn begins; but when the leaves begin to fall by twos and threes, and the tree to look dry and unlovely, you know that the first great blast that comes to herald the winter will strew the ground with wreck and leave the forest bare. So, it is to be feared, religious opinion in this country is not so far from a denial of Jesus

Christ as it was thirty years ago. And one proof of this is the undoubted fact that Jesus Christ is coming to be looked upon more and more as a past event and not as a living fact. We reverence Him; we speculatively admit His claims to Divine worship; we write plaintive books about Him; we travel to the Holy Land and sketch the cities or the spots where He lived and suffered; but do we pray to Him? Do we study His life with a view to imitation? Do we weep over His Passion? Do we believe in the existence of Grace, actually at our hands, and really efficacious through His Headship? An Eastern people possess, or possessed till lately, a sovereign secluded in a palace, powerless, without influence on the nation, but revered with almost God-like honour. And the tone of popular Christianity in Protestant countries is—to say everything reverent and honourable about our Lord, to speak of Him with the vague magniloquence with which one speaks of heroic ages and mythical heroes, and all the time to live as if His memory were all He had left behind, and His example all that He had given to man.

St. Paul, in one of the pregnant sentences in which he has traced out thoughts for other men to develop into systems, says of Jesus Christ, ‘He was delivered up for our sins, and rose again for our justification.’¹ In the first member of this sentence he expresses the great truth of Redemption, which we have already considered; in the second he refers to Sanctification, which we are now to enter upon.

The theory, or rather the Faith, of the Catholic

¹ Rom. iv. 25.

Church is, that our Saviour has been carrying on His work of Sanctification ever since He rose from the dead; and that as long as there is a soul to be saved He will continue to carry it on. In one sense, His work was completed at His death; man was redeemed, the whole price was paid, and all grace and glory purchased. But in another sense it was still to be done. 'He *rose again* for our justification;' that is, He rose again and liveth for ever, in order to apply His dearly-bought Redemption to every soul of man, by the means which we shall presently mention.

It will give point to our inquiries as to what Sanctification is if we notice the prevailing errors on the subject. It would be a very difficult task to present in a brief form the fluctuations and contradictions of non-Catholics in the doctrines of Justification and Sanctification since the time when Luther first began to talk of fiduciary apprehension, and Calvin to reason away Free-will. There is probably not a Protestant in the country who would hold by the words of any one of the so-called Reformers, from Wickliffe to Beza. And this makes controversy very difficult; for you have no sooner stated an opinion and refuted it than your opponent says it is none of his. Still there are two views on our present subject which are more or less common in our own time and country; and these may be roughly called Imputation and Anti-Sacerdotalism. I think I am not wrong in saying that there are many who consider Justification to be nothing more than God's way of regarding the soul. A 'justified' man is not changed in heart, or altered in any quality of his soul. God con-

siders or repute him 'justified,' and that is all. And therefore the term Sanctification in their language is unnecessary and misleading. No one is 'holy;' it is only that God deigns to repute him so, and to cover the filthiness of his sins, which, nevertheless, still remains. As to the internal feelings, views, or aspirations necessary or fitting in order to be secure of imputed Justification, we do not find many men who think alike. Opinions range over a widely-graduated scale; from those who condemn all internal acts except a blind unreasoning 'assurance', to those who fully accept St. James's doctrine that Faith without works is dead in itself.

The other view which now largely prevails is Anti-Sacerdotalism; that is to say, the view that no ministry on the part of man is necessary for our justification, but that it is a matter solely between the individual and his God. It would do away with priests, and substitute preachers, readers, advisers, or superintendents. It would abolish all Sacraments and other ordinances conveying grace to the soul. Above all, it is especially and bitterly opposed to the doctrine of a Perpetual Sacrifice of the New Law, declaring that Christ offered Sacrifice once for all.

The Catholic doctrine of Sanctification, as gathered from the Scriptures, as expounded in St. Augustine, and definitely laid down in the Council of Trent, is in direct opposition to both these opinions. We hold that in Justification there is implied real inherent Sanctification of the justified soul; and we maintain that there is a 'ministry' of grace, or, in other words, a system of

external ordinances administered by men, on which Justification and Sanctification in ordinary course depend. We believe that men are appointed 'dispensers of God's mysteries,' and that their dispensations work real changes in the soul.

We have already noticed, in speaking of Redemption, that the supernatural order in which man was placed when God created him implied, first, a supernatural end—that is, the 'face-to-face' vision of God; and secondly, a supernatural gift in the present life, to enable him to arrive at that glorious and beatific vision. This gift is Grace. At the Fall, human nature lost the privilege of Grace. And it was the work of the Redeemer to restore that privilege, by satisfying to the full the offended majesty of God. By Redemption, therefore, human nature became once more capable of Grace. By the Fall it had been stripped, weakened, degraded, but not utterly destroyed. Reason, Free-will, and the other powers of man's spirit were not annihilated, though fettered or darkened. And now the chains were taken off, and the prison-vaults burst open, and the freed captive lay awaiting the rising of the sun.

There is no word more frequently used by our Lord and His Apostles to signify the effect which His coming has wrought upon the souls of men than the word Life. The two most striking facts in the order of physical things are Life and Death. Life means motion, beauty, harmony, and joy; Death is silence, decay, and horror. And it is no wonder, therefore, that the spiritual state of the world before our Lord's coming is called in the Scriptures by the terrible name of Death.

Holy Zachary, in the canticle in which he closes, as it were, the songs of the generations of longing and hoping Prophets, sees the nations of the world, like the silent tenants of the caves down in the gloomy valleys round Jerusalem, sitting in 'darkness and in the shadow of Death.'² It was the Death which had been threatened and incurred even in Eden itself.³ It was the Death which Isaiah describes in his vision of the sin of the world, when he sees the souls of men lying in 'dark places as dead men.'⁴ It was the Death which Ezechiel was shown when the hand of the Lord led him forth and set him down in the midst of a plain that was full of bones—bones dead, marrowless, and dry—strewn white upon the plain where armies had fought and men had slain each other. And as the dry bones lived again when the words of power were said, so, in far-off promise, came the vision of a time when the Lord should 'open the sepulchres' of His people, and 'bring them out of their graves.'⁵ No one can read the Epistles of St. Paul, especially that to the Romans and the two to the Corinthians, without being struck with the mournful repetition of the word Death. By sin came Death; Death was king from Adam to Moses; men brought forth fruit that was dead; man's body was the body of Death; his whole being spoke of Death, answered of Death, and the odour of Death was in him.⁶

It was to raise the dead that Jesus Christ took flesh. He stood before the sepulchre of humanity as He stood

* Luke i. 79.

* Isaiah lix. 10.

* Rom. v. 12, 14, vii. 5; 1 Cor. xv. 21; 2 Cor. i. 9, ii. 16.

* Gen. ii. 17.

* Ezechiel xxxvii. 13.

over the grave of Lazarus, and He bade them roll the stone away; and He spoke words that were mighty with the tears of His prayer and the blood of His suffering. The dead came forth, and casting off the grave-clothes that bound him, knelt at the feet of His Saviour, and at the hand of grace and power was once more a strong living man.

For the grandest kind of Life that ever can live upon this earth was brought back to it by Jesus Christ. It was brought back; for it had been given to man when he was placed in Paradise, and then Death had destroyed it. It was the supernatural Life of the soul.

Life is chiefly known by motion and action. The stubborn rock and the senseless clod have no life, for they have no self-motion; and as they never live, so they never die. Far down in the sea-depths, where light can hardly fathom, organism begins in rudimentary forms, and shapeless tangled masses grow and decay. The trees and the flowers have their life of growth and change; and they have their death, when they wither, fall, and rot. Then a higher kind of Life appears, and there are beings which do not simply grow, but feel, and in their activity are responsive to their feeling. The tissues, the earthy matters which make them up, are traversed through and through by an impalpable essence—a kind of soul, which mocks at all the efforts of the student of nature to seize and analyse it. And when this animal Life departs, there is no mistaking the presence of Death. The withering of a flower is sad, and the eye turns sadly away from it; and when, in passing through a wood, we come sud-

denly upon the stripped and white skeleton of a great tree, we start perhaps; but there is far greater sadness and horror when some creature with blood in its veins, with sense and inarticulate language, lays down its strength or its swiftness on the earth, and closes its darkening eyes. Its life was higher, and its death is a greater shock.

But the Life of growth and of sense is only the threshold of Life. Human life is altogether a different world. Man seems to live two lives—the life of Sense and the life of Spirit. In his life of Sense and physical motion he resembles the animals, and his bodily frame seems formed upon the model of theirs. But his Spirit! An essence which is so fine and uncompounded that it cannot suffer dissolution or decay; an energy whose action rises to the heights of Being and penetrates to the depths of Possibility; a substance whose powers are Thought, that can see things through and round about, and Will, that can exercise free choice; a fount whose very redundancy and overflow, after rising to its spiritual acts, fills all the springs of sense and corporal action, so that the whole man is one being, and can lay claim to all he does: this is the Spirit of man. Its Maker is God; and it is not made as God forms bodies and things physical, by allowing the laws of nature to hold on their course, but each Spirit is the ‘breath of life,’ separately breathed into the mortal frame by God’s special creative act. And it is God’s image and likeness; it is the created similitude of His substance; for as God knows and wills (although He is the Infinite), and as there is nothing higher than knowing and will-

ing, so the Spirit of man, having the gift of Knowledge and of Will, is a finite and created likeness of the Un-created Infinite.

Is there possible for man a higher Life than this?

To any one who did not know God's Revelation, it would seem that there was not. And yet there must be; for men had souls and bodies, and they thought and felt, during all the ages when the curse was on the world, and when the Prophets were crying Death. There must be; for when Jesus Christ stood among the Jews of Jerusalem in the throng of a festival-day, He cried out and complained that they would not come to Him that they 'might have Life;' ⁷ and later, when the crowds were round Him again, He told them He was come that all men 'might have Life, and have it more abundantly.' ⁸ And the answer is, that Jesus Christ came to give us the Life of GRACE, which is as much higher than all other life vouchsafed to man or angel as the heavens are higher than the earth.

The word which is rendered into English by 'Grace' means literally 'Favour,' and sometimes 'a Gift.' And it is because it is by excellence the gift or favour of God to the soul that the Life given by Jesus Christ is called Grace. For we are not speaking just now of particular favours or graces, such as Almighty God may bestow on man from time to time, but of that grand gift of Sanctifying Grace which makes man pleasing in the sight of God. That such a gift exists can be doubted by no one who does so much as follow the passages of Holy Scripture brought forward in this exposition.

⁷ John v. 40.

⁸ Ib. x. 10.

If some gigantic animal of ages long past had wandered over the plain and through the forest, until he stood beneath the sheer and inaccessible height of a rocky wall, which lifted itself to the clouds—and if some Providence, for ends of its own, had seconded the wistful yearnings of the creature, and given it mighty wings to fly up and be at rest—this would have been a work of power and miracle. And to know what is Grace we must remember what is Glory; for Grace is the means to Glory. Our supernatural Glory or Bliss, prepared for us by a loving God, is the sight of Himself ‘face to face,’ as St. Paul says; ‘even as He is,’ in the words of St. John. For the human Spirit, grand as it is, to be able to look upon its Creator so, it must be furnished with a special gift or power. (This we have already mentioned when speaking on Redemption.) But since the Spirit has to live a mortal life of conflict and merit before its Bliss is granted to it, therefore, in order to raise the whole tenor of this temporal trial to a level with the end of it, the Gift is begun in this present life. So that Grace is no part of man’s nature. It is a pure gift. It is the wings on which the Spirit flies, which otherwise would have painfully measured steps upon the earth. It is a gift direct from God. No creature, not even the highest and brightest Seraph, could give you or me, as of himself, the grace to say ‘Lord Jesus!’

This supreme gift of Grace may, as is evident, be looked at from two points of view; that is to say, either as a motion and assistance on the part of God to the doing of good, or as a permanent *state* of the Spirit. As we are not here to enter into special questions, it is

not necessary to insist upon this distinction. We shall consider Grace chiefly as a state of the Soul; for what is true of Grace as an habitual state is substantially true also of Grace as an actual motion.

The life, which is Grace, begins where the death, which is Sin, comes to an end. Justification from sin is a real and true 'new birth' of the soul. In the prophecies of old God promised to 'wash us, and we should be whiter than snow'—to blot out our sins—to give us a clean heart and a renewed spirit.⁹ A new birth means a new life; and just as natural birth is the beginning of the natural life, with all its motion, activity, and beauty, so the spiritual birth, that is, the conferring of justifying Grace, is the beginning of a spiritual or supernatural life, in which the acts, movements, and comeliness of the regenerated Spirit are supernatural and meritorious of life everlasting.¹⁰ 'He hath saved us by the bath of regeneration' (the Apostle is referring to Baptism), 'and of renewal by the Holy Ghost, whom He hath poured upon us abundantly, that being justified by His Grace, we may become heirs of life everlasting.'¹¹ Thus the Soul which had been dead begins to live. The prodigal child has fallen at his Father's feet, and the 'first robe' has been brought forth with speed and given him to wear as his own—that 'robe of justice' of which Isaias spoke;¹² that 'wedding-robe' which must be worn by every wedding-guest.¹³ The unction of the Holy Spirit is poured profusely upon his head, as on some proud and noble friend whom a King invites to

⁹ Ps. l. 11, 12; Ezechiel xxxvi. 25.

¹¹ Titus iii. 5.

¹² Isaias lxi. 10.

¹⁰ John iii. 5.

¹³ Matt. xxii. 12.

his banquet.¹⁴ From being darkness he has become light. From death he has passed into life. He is now pleasing to God, the adopted son of God, the heir of Heaven;¹⁵ he is even a partaker of God's own nature,¹⁶ because he has the beginning, the promise, the substance, of what he hopes for, the blessed Vision of God; and as none but God Himself can naturally look upon God's face, therefore he who holds the gift of Grace, which will change, when the veil is lifted, to the gift of Glory, is, in some sense, a sharer in the very nature of God. All other earthly life is little and low compared with such a Life as this. The sanctified soul lives on a level to which mere human nature may perhaps faintly aspire, but which it has no powers to reach. There was once that Angels came into the plain of Sodom, and took out Lot, and bore him away into the mountains—the serene mountains where safety dwelt, where the air was purer and the heavens nearer, and the foe farther away. So man, by Grace, is taken hold of and carried away out of the fire and the sulphur, the darkness and the horror, of the land that lies low down and is to perish; and he is set in a mountain region where everything is higher—the end higher, the means higher, the thoughts more pure, the feet more swift, to walk in the light, with the mists below him, until the greater Light dawns and Faith is changed into Vision.

And this life of Grace is the life which Jesus Christ has restored to the world by His coming. It is unnecessary to insist upon the fact that all the Grace we

¹⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 21; Titus iii. 6. ¹⁵ Rom. viii. 17. ¹⁶ 2 Peter i. 4.

have or can hope for comes to us through Jesus Christ. 'Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be *holy* and *unspotted* in His sight in charity; who hath predestinated us unto the *adoption of Sons* (through Jesus Christ) unto Himself; according to the purpose of His will; unto the praise of the glory of His grace, in which *He hath filled us with Grace* in His beloved Son, in whom we have *Redemption* through His blood, the *remission of Sins*, according to the riches of His grace.'¹⁷ Remission of Sins, fulness of Grace, cleanness, holiness, Sonship—these are the effects of our Lord's coming, as summed up in this splendid passage of St. Paul. If we endeavour briefly to understand how these gifts of Grace come to us by the Incarnation, we shall at once advance our purpose, which is the realising of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, and see more clearly what a divine reality is the life of Grace, of which the busy world knows so little.

It must be remembered, then, that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, 'rose again' for our justification. His work was not over when He died. By His life and death it is true that He really and truly *merited* our justification. He merited glory, exaltation, and worship for Himself as man; He merited every good gift for us. In the well-known phrase of Holy Scripture recalling the repeated and figurative sacrifices of the time of expectation, He was an offering and a victim to

¹⁷ Eph. i. 3-7.

God 'unto the odour of sweetness.'¹⁸ All was *through* His Blood, as St. Paul has just told us. But all this infinite store of merit was not at once given to every individual man. This is evident, first of all from the first principles of reason; because if every man has always and inalienably the merits of Christ, then all acts of man are useless; Christ need not have sent Apostles; the Apostles need not have preached; the Scriptures need not have been written; the Church need not have existed. And if good acts in such a case would be useless, bad ones would be harmless, and we should have to subscribe to the most anti-social doctrine that error has ever produced, the doctrine that no sin is sin to a justified man. For which reason, every thinking man in these days is ready to admit that some act on our part (inspired and assisted by grace, no doubt) is necessary before the Justification of Christ becomes our own. And this is only what the Scripture affirms in all those numerous passages wherein Faith, Baptism, Conversion, and other works are described as accompanying Justification. Jesus Christ rose from the grave to sanctify the souls of men. He was 'full of Grace and truth,'¹⁹ that is, of *true* Grace. The ancient Law, with its needy elements, its sterile rites, which conferred no grace upon those who assisted thereat, had passed away, and Christ had come, full of real sanctifying Grace. He was the antithesis of Moses: the Law came by Moses; but by Jesus Christ, Grace and truth.²⁰ He was that fountain of which so many Prophets had sung—the fountain which Isaias saw turning the desert

¹⁸ Eph. v. 2.¹⁹ John i. 14.²⁰ John i. 17.

into a watered garden ; the fountain of Salvation, from which the people were to drink with joy ; the fountain which Joel saw pouring its waters from the Lord's House, and which Zachary beheld open to all the house of Israel. He was the Fountain of which He Himself said, ' He that shall drink of the water that I will give him shall not thirst for ever ; but the water that I will give him shall become in him a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting.'²¹ And let us notice here how under the image of living and flowing water, an image so full of significance to the dwellers in Syrian hills and deserts, our Lord Himself, like His Prophets before Him, described that living Gift which is Grace in this life and Glory in the life everlasting.

Now the Grace of Jesus Christ, both that which His Humanity possessed by virtue of its union with the Godhead, and that which by virtue of the same union it merited for itself and for us—all this sea of Grace, wide-stretching, deep, nay infinite, came from one source only. It was the work of the Holy Spirit. Among the Three Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, it is to the Holy Ghost that are ascribed the operations of Grace. It was the Holy Ghost, therefore, whom Isaiah saw filling the future Redeemer, and resting upon Him, as the fertilising rain-clouds rest and hang over the tops of the solitary hills. It was the Holy Spirit who descended on Mary, Mother of God. When He took up the Book in the Nazarene synagogue on the Sabbath, the words which met His eye were spoken of Himself—'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me.' It was the Spirit which led

²¹ John iv. 13.

Him—that is, which wrought in Him all that He did; leading Him out to the desert, bringing Him back from the Jordan ‘full of the Holy Ghost.’²² In the Spirit He cast out devils; and when He sent out His ministers, He said to them, as imparting a Gift of which He Himself was full, ‘Receive the Holy Ghost.’ And it was this unction of the Spirit, Author of all grace and power, to which St. Peter witnessed when he gave thanks to God for the conversion of the Gentiles.²³ The Holy Spirit dwelt in Him in all the ‘fullness of His Divinity.’ For although it is true that the Second Person alone is incarnate, nevertheless, since all the external works of the Godhead are the work of all the Three Divine Persons, the sanctity which fills our Lord’s Humanity from that ineffable union is the work of the Holy Spirit. And this is the ‘Spirit of Jesus,’ which He promised to send down upon His children after His departure from the earth.

Remembering, then, what and whence were the Sanctity and Grace of our Saviour, and knowing that it is of this same ‘fullness we all receive,’ what are we to think of the Sanctification and Grace which fall upon us through Him? He is risen for our Justification. The perennial and immense fountain of all Holiness is all for us. First of all, it is the Holy Ghost Himself Whom Jesus gives us: ‘If any one have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’²⁴ It is by the ‘Holy Ghost, Who is given to us,’ that the ‘charity of God is spread abroad in our hearts’—in other words, that we are filled with sanctifying Grace. So that the

²² Luke iv. 1.²³ Acts x 38.²⁴ Rom. viii. 9.

same Spirit which filled with holiness the Sacred Humanity of our Lord fills also, in their measure, the souls of the just. The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost—these are one and the same thing. But the special dispensation of the Incarnation is, that this gift of God comes *through* or *from* the Sacred Humanity. One of the most striking of all the thoughts which St. Paul presents to us in his Epistles is that Christ Jesus is our Head and we His members.²⁵ From the fourth chapter to the Ephesians he is evidently speaking, not of a mere political, social, or moral headship, but of something real and physical, or rather hyperphysical. As the head is principal member of the body, and has in itself all the powers of soul and sensibility which make up the human being—and as all sense, knowledge, growth, and action may be said to depend upon the head, and to be derived from it as a centre of vital power—so it is with Jesus Christ and the souls of men. The Grace that primarily is in Him is for them. To Him it was given, and from Him it must flow to them. By a slight variation of this pregnant illustration, St. Paul describes the process of Sanctification as ‘putting on’ Christ, being made like to Him by a sort of transformation, and growing into Christ’s likeness. It is a process which is none the less real because invisible. The spirit of a man, lofty as it is, is capable of a life and beauty far above its nature. In its own nature it is the image and likeness of God ; but when it becomes sanctified by Grace, it puts on a new and a more sub-

²⁵ Eph. iv. 15 ; Coloss. i. 18 ; 1 Cor. vi. 15.

lime likeness. And the soul of Jesus was as like to God by Grace as it is possible for the creature to be like the Creator. This likeness, which consists in the 'effusion' of the Holy Spirit, *we* can receive from Him; and so we form Jesus Christ within us. And thus every soul in Grace can say what the Saints alone can say in its fulness, 'I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me.'²⁶ That which our bodies do, that which our senses enjoy, that which our mind or heart is occupied with—all these things in themselves are mean at the best, and at the worst are very bad. The real Life is the life we receive by sanctifying Grace, coming to us from the Sacred Humanity. This is our robe of beauty; this is a faculty and power of keen edge and wide sweep; this is the root-principle of that series of good thoughts, words, and acts which, we may hope, will issue in the Life everlasting. For our robe is washed in the Blood of the Lamb, and all that we offer to God is acceptable, because that sacred Blood is seen upon it. This is the true Life, and so St. Paul's word is true, that the 'Grace of God *is* Life everlasting.'²⁷

Such is the Grace of Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I said at the beginning that the mistake men made was to look upon Jesus Christ as a mere fact of the historical past. Alas for our souls if Jesus be not risen and living yet, for we are yet in our sins! All I have tried to say upon the beauty of Grace, and the transformation of our souls into the likeness of Christ, may be realised at this day and at this hour. It is just as if the loving Voice of Him Who stood

²⁶ Gal. ii. 20.

²⁷ Rom. vi. 25.

upon the shore of Genesareth were heard at this moment to say: 'Come, and follow Me.' It is just as though the outstretched arm of Him Who touched the bier at Naim were now to touch us, and bid us stop in our passage to the tomb. To believe and be baptised, to repent and be absolved, to eat and drink our Lord's Body and Blood—these are the conditions, some for one case, some for another, on which depends our being numbered among the living sons of God. Jesus Christ still lives and sanctifies, through the Ministry which He has left in the world. By the Ministry of men and of outward acts, now, as in the Apostolic times, the 'mysteries' of God are given to the world, and the riches of Christ are conveyed to the souls of men. Let me not be misunderstood here. First of all, no external ministry can dispense with internal acts and true change of heart (through grace) in all who are capable of using their reason. Secondly, multitudes in every age have belonged to the external system of dispensation—to the body of the Church—by Faith more or less real, who have nevertheless lived, and do live, without share in the Life of the Head, on account of wilful grievous sin, which makes their Faith dead. With these explanations, an external ministry is an absolute necessity; for so God has ordained.

There is a story in the Fourth Book of Kings which has always appeared to me to be meant as an instruction to some who see difficulties in the dispensation of an ordained ministry of Grace. The child of the Sunamiteess had been struck by a stroke of the sun, and had died on her knee at the noontide hour. After Giezi

had carried the staff of Eliseus and laid it upon the face of the dead child, and 'there was no voice nor sense,' then Eliseus came in person. And going in, he shut the door upon him and upon the child, and prayed to the Lord. And then he went up, and lay upon the child; and he put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he bowed himself upon him; and the child's flesh grew warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house, once to and fro; and he went up, and lay upon him; and the child gaped seven times, and opened his eyes.²⁸ He was raised to life again. This is a strange history. But a reverent reader of God's Word will ponder over it. Ancient Saints have meditated upon it, and seen the 'instruction' it was meant to convey. It was a figure of the Incarnation, and of the system introduced by the Incarnation. It would have been no greater effort of God's power had Eliseus stood at the door, or stood afar off, and raised the dead child with a word. So it would have been perfectly easy to the same Infinite Creator and Lord of all things to save the world by an act of His Will, and to Jesus Christ to have dispensed altogether with ministers and priests. But the Word became Flesh. The Infinite bowed Himself down to our littleness. The invisible God became visible and tangible to the senses of man's body. And so it was to be to the end. The mouth to the mouth, the eye to the eye, the hand to the hand; thus was to be carried on the dispensation of Life eternal. Man was to announce the Truth to his

²⁸ 4 Kings iv. 32.

fellow man ; man's hand was to regenerate, man's voice was to consecrate and sanctify, to bind and to loose. Feeble and frail, sometimes wicked and reprobate, was to be the minister to whom such awful powers were given. But it was not to affect the efficacy of the act, for the principal doer was Christ. Peter may baptise, Paul may baptise, Judas may baptise, but always it is ' Christ Who baptiseth.'²⁹

The outward surroundings of Sanctification since Christ left this world are often unworthy and mean in the eyes of the prudence of the world ; but so was the Stable, so was the poverty of Nazareth, and the suffering of Calvary. Water, oil, bread and wine, imposition of hands, the breath of a man—these are poor disguises for the Grace of God ; but they are not unlike the ' form of a slave' which God Himself has taken. And the love and far-reaching wisdom which made Him take Flesh and converse with men have also urged Him to use this visible ministry to the end. What God ultimately seeks is not the external act, but the inward disposition. But the way to man's heart and soul is through the avenues of his sense. Let us remember we are speaking of the *masses* of mankind, each member of whom has a right to the Sanctification purchased for him by Jesus Christ. There are few men of the world's millions who do not make their internal acts more surely and definitely when they join them with something outward. Take the ministry of absolution. Say that the important matter, in order to obtain forgiveness of sin, is to be truly repentant. I

²⁹ John i. 33.

will grant it, and I say that, looking at the vast majority of human sinners, there are none in whom this internal necessary sorrow is not made more thorough by the humiliation of confession, more definite by the enumeration of sins, more sure and certain by appointed times and places, and more heartfelt by the bowing down of the spirit to the ordinance of God. And so our Lord has given to external rites the power of conferring real Grace. It is a well-known psychological experience that the fervour of an interior emotion is immensely increased by exterior activity. Love, hate, jealousy, and sorrow grow deeper, for a time, with every word and act; and if they are suppressed, they disappear. The Church's children live upon the external ministry of the Church, as the Apostles lived upon the looks and the voice of Jesus Christ. They know it is something real. The Seven Sacraments are to them seven streams from Calvary. Outward communion, visible worship, material churches, the beauty of God's house—these are the things that bind their hearts together as members of a common fatherland, a figure of the fatherland to come. The Blessed Sacrament is the crown and summit of all that visible order which was established in Jesus Christ. Church, Pastors, Teaching, Sacraments, Sacred Rites, Abiding Presence—it is altogether a great and glorious Kingdom to those who have eyes to discern. I have read of travellers who come on scenes hitherto unvisited by man; broad plains, ringed round by mighty mountains rising peak on peak, with rivers widening to the sea; the brightness, the hush, the awe, the sweetness of virgin

nature. But when a Christian man, with the blood of Christ upon his forehead, comes into a Catholic church, and looks for the symbolic light before the quiet Tabernacle; when he sinks upon his knees, with Faith swelling and surging in his heart; when there rises to his spiritual view the thought of the Kingdom of God upon earth, the great Church of God, One, Holy, Apostolic, in all lands; the mighty rivers of the Sacraments, the pervading presence of the Eucharist, the whole realm of the Holy Ghost, with its incessant supernatural action, the play of Grace, the response of meritorious, supernatural acts, as though Angels of God were ascending and descending—when all this comes stealing upon his thought, nay, upon his sense, what can he do but cry out, as Saints have cried: ‘Courts of my Lord! Kingdom of my Saviour’s Blood! Ah, one day here is better than a thousand! Let me praise Thee, O my God, for ever and ever!’

V.

THE ABIDING PRESENCE.

WE cannot know who Jesus Christ is without going one step further than we have hitherto done. We have considered Him as the Mystery hidden from all ages ; we have looked upon Him in His visible and natural presence on this earth ; we have seen Him carry His Cross and shed His Blood ; we have beheld His Blood overflowing the whole world. But now we are to discuss a great and culminating wonder ; a Presence more stupendous than His presence in the crib of Bethlehem—a Sacrifice which is the very reproduction of Calvary—a Sacrament which contains the great Fount of all grace for all time.

We believe that our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the night on which He was betrayed, consecrated bread and wine, and in that consecration changed them into His own Sacred Body and Blood. We believe that He gave power to His successors, the Bishops and Priests of His Church, to do the same stupendous thing which He did Himself. And we believe, in consequence, that in every Catholic Church there is, at the time of Mass, the Real Presence of Jesus Christ under the forms or

appearances of bread and wine, and at other times, as a rule, under those of bread alone.

I know not whether Humanity would ever have looked for, longed for, or expected such a gift as this. The travellers on the Resurrection-day on the road to Emmaus felt their hearts 'burning' within them, in the presence of Him whom they knew not; and as He was passing from them, they held Him with a passionate entreaty to 'tarry with them, for the evening was coming on, and the day was almost done.'¹ And I know not if Humanity, with obscure sense of love and longing, would have clamoured for a lengthening out of the sojourn of the Incarnate Word. But the cry has not been needed. The last days of the world and the approach of the evening of time have not been left without their special gift of the Presence of their God. The new Covenant, the era of redemption, would hardly have been that favoured time which the Prophets foresaw unless there had been in it a Presence greater than that of Angel or Cloud or Fiery Pillar. A Christian Church, if it had only in it a pulpit and a reading-desk—or even a table with bread and wine—would have been no better than a Synagogue of the Old Law, and far less favoured than that grand Temple where God's glory dwelt, and His holy Name was invoked with sacrifice, and incense, and the sound of praise. The 'people of acquisition,' the redeemed flock of Christ, if they had no way of approaching their Saviour's fountains except by prayer, or faith, or 'needy' symbols, would have had cause to envy the children of Juda, who

Luke xxiv. 29.

also could turn to the Lord by prayer and faith, and prostrate themselves before the Sanctuary of His glory in the House where He had promised to hear prayer and to be nigh at hand to supplication. The Temple of Jerusalem would have been better than a Christian Church; and as the Temple of Jerusalem has no longer a stone upon a stone, the bands of pilgrims who went up on the festival days would now have nowhere to go, and would be obliged to be content with houses in which God dwelt not, save as He dwells everywhere and is in the midst of every two or three gathered together in His Name. But it is not so. 'The Bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the Lord's Body? For we being many are one Bread, one body, all that partake of one Bread.'² There are Churches, as you know—the Catholic Churches throughout the world—in which you will find a sacred Bread, which is the Lord's Body. And that is what makes a Church of the New Law what it is. The Church is a place where there is an Altar—and the Altar has upon it a living Victim—and the faithful crowd to the Sanctuary for the worship and communion of that Bread, by which they become 'one bread;' that is, of that Body by receiving which they become sharers in the life and 'spirit' of Jesus Christ. There is no greater fact, next to the Incarnation itself, in all Christian history than the Real Presence. If we take a broad general view of the Christian centuries, we seem, as it were, to be looking up the nave of a vast cathedral where the nations and generations of eighteen centuries are worshipping

² 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

the Lamb who, under mysterious signs, is present upon the great Altar. Every century has a voice, and a hymn, and a confession of its faith and its love. We hear the Apostles solemnly stating, in measured words, the awful form of institution. We hear John telling the wondrous history of the day at Capharnaum, when Jesus led on His questioners from the loaves to the manna, from the manna to Himself, and then thrilled them with the explicit promise, more tremendous in its simple phrase than any vision of Ezechiel, 'The Bread which I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world.'³ We hear Paul reiterating the sacramental words which he had heard, not from man, but by special revelation from Jesus Christ; we see his anxiety for purity of conscience in those who approach that altar;⁴ we hear his threats of damnation to those who eat and drink unworthily; and we hear the solemn cadences of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and its comparison of the Christian altar with the altar of the ancient Law. We listen to the concordant yet varied eucharistic hymn of the first four centuries. We hear the voices of martyrs, bishops, confessors, and doctors. That Bread, they sing, is no common bread, not the bread which art makes from nature's fruits, not merely blessed or consecrated bread. The senses seem to tell you that it is only this; but we must believe the word of God; it is 'really,' 'truly,' the 'very' Body and Blood of Christ. It is the whole Christ, living Body and Godhead. It is eaten, not consumed, says holy Chrysostom, and when it is dealt out it remaineth whole and entire. It

³ John vi. 52.⁴ 1 Cor. xi. 27.

is no figure ; it is not present by faith alone, nor is it eaten by charity ; but it is real, and it is truly and really eaten. And all the liturgies of the East, and the Gothic and the Mozarabic, join in saying that the words of consecration 'make' the Body and Blood of Christ, changing the elements, as the water was changed into wine, and the rod of Moses to a beast. All these expressions and phrases occur in the testimony of the first four or five centuries. And we can hardly linger to listen to all that we might hear if we pleased. St. Ignatius of Antioch, a man who had seen the Apostles, is heard confuting the heretical Docetæ, who denied the reality of our Lord's Flesh, by appealing to the reality of it in the Eucharist.⁵ More writers in the two first ages do the same. Athanasius and Leo the Great use the Real Presence as a proof against Monophysite errors. Cyril of Alexandria brings it against Nestorius, as a first principle admitted by both parties. And Paul of Samosata, testifying to truth whilst propping up error, makes the reality of Christ's Blood in the Eucharist an argument for his own heresy. Hilary smites the Arians with an analogy drawn from the Real Presence ; and Isidore of Pelusium refutes with a similar comparison the heresy of those who deny the divinity of the Holy Ghost. All this may be read in books which are perfectly easy to get at. Particular texts may be disputed, and expressions here and there may not be admitted ; but no one can examine with a fair mind the general sense of the earliest ages without finding the Real Presence pervading them all. The testimony of

⁵ *Ad Smyrncenses*, n. vii.

antiquity to the Presence on the Christian altar is like the voice of the great multitude seen by St. John in his vision, which cried out that sublime 'Amen!' in the glory of their white robes, washed in the Blood of the Lamb.⁶ 'The whole world over,' says St. Augustine, 'our *ransom is taken* (received), and the answer is, Amen!'⁷ He alludes to the formula of communion, in which the communicant answered, Amen—a custom still kept up on certain occasions even in the Latin Church. Such an Amen rises to Heaven when we go apart a little from traditional prejudice, from national narrowness, from worldly thoughts, and listen to the voice of the multitude of saints and doctors, and even of sinners and heretics, which has worshipped in the Christian Church, or been expelled from its fold, since the day the Holy Spirit fell on the Galilæan fishermen in Jerusalem.

The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the Eucharist, apart from the effects it is intended by God's love to work in the world, is a stumbling-block to Jewish questioners and a folly to Gentile wisdom. In this it is like the Incarnation itself, and the Cross. The several tempers of both Jew and Gentile are well represented in this country at the present day. There are those who believe in God and honour the Bible, and have a traditional religion which they have received from their mothers, their schoolmasters, or their preachers; and these, like the Jews of old, 'speak ill of God,' though without meaning it, and say, 'Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?'⁸ It was

⁶ Apoc. vii. 12.

⁷ In Ps. cxxv. n. 9.

⁸ Ps. lxxvii. 19.

a question eminently characteristic of a people who never could be induced to trust themselves to God, or made to see that there might be 'some better thing' than what their fathers knew of. Eighteen hundred years after they contradicted Moses in the desert before the manna came, they showed themselves still the same people when a greater than Moses spoke to them of the True Bread from Heaven. 'How can this Man give us His Flesh to eat?'⁹ And is not the same question asked to this day? As for the Gentile, he does not question; he scoffs. Like the Athenian Epicureans and Stoics, who called St. Paul a 'sower of words,' and 'mocked' at his preaching, or like the practical Roman, Festus, who called him a 'madman,' modern wise men and men of the world treat the dogma of the Real Presence with a contempt which either prevents them from making serious inquiry or causes them to blaspheme that which they know not.

The words of Holy Scripture, interpreted by the universal consent of antiquity, are so clear and decisive, when taken in their obvious sense, that, setting mere prejudice on one side, no one would have any hesitation in believing the Real Presence, were it not so contrary to the laws of nature and the experience of the senses. There are multitudes in this country, I need not say, whose objection to this holy Truth is merely the objection of a man who has always been brought up to think it a fable. These have inherited the spirit of carnal Judaism. But those who have definite and positive objections and difficulties almost al-

⁹ John vi. 53.

ways fall back on physical impossibilities and the testimony of their bodily senses.

I do not here dwell upon the fact that such objections as these would be fatal to belief in the Incarnation itself. But a few simple reflections will show that difficulties on the score of physical experience and sensible appearances are no real difficulties at all.

When the believer kneels before the altar in a Catholic church, and at the moment of the elevation in the Mass reverently raises his eyes to the Priest who stands before it in the vestments of sacrifice, he beholds the white and shining disk of what looks like a wafer of bread; and if he could look into the cup which is next held up for worship, he would see what seemed to be wine. Yet he believes that Jesus Christ is present in the hands of His minister under each of those appearances. And the unbeliever looks too; and his heart says, 'If this were really a Human Body I should see it. I should see head and members, size, and colour, and shape, as I do when I see other human bodies. For it is impossible that a thing should be present before me, and yet produce no effect upon my senses.'

It seems to me that it is sufficient to state this last assumption, in order to see that it is simply false. It confounds the impossible with the miraculous. You might as well deny the fact of our Lord's Ascension on the plea that it is impossible for a human Body to mount up into the air by its own power. It is not true to say that wherever a material thing is present it must produce an effect upon the senses. What are the senses

of a man? They are an apparatus of nerves, animated by the soul, which must be affected by some external impression before sensation takes place. Sensation is really the product of two agents under certain conditions; the first agent is the sense itself, the second is the external material thing; and the condition is, the union or connection of the two. If the sense is destroyed, there is no sensation; if the external thing does not exist, there is no sensation; and if there is no connection between the two, there is no sensation. There is a striking expression in the Gospel of St. Luke, which illustrates what I am coming to. In the history of the disciples who went to Emmaus on Easter Sunday, it is said that '*their eyes were held* that they should not know Jesus.'¹⁰ This evidently means a great deal more than that they did not recognise Him. They knew Him before, and they would naturally have easily known Him then. But their eyes were miraculously *held*. In other words, they had their senses, and Jesus was there, but, by the interposition of a Divine power, the features of our Lord and Saviour did not make an impression on the sense; there was no connection between object and eye. Further than this, the impression produced was of something which did not really exist; for whatever these two disciples saw, it was not the lineaments of Jesus; and there was none present but Jesus. What occurred once, by the power of God, on the road to Emmaus, occurs every day in the Holy Eucharist. There is a Human Body present—the Word made Flesh—and the sense of man

¹⁰ Luke xxiv. 16.

takes no note of it, because the Omnipotent has dropped a dividing veil between sense and Thing; for He can do so, and in His love He has willed so to do. And as He has willed that He should be present and not seen, so He has willed that other things should be seen, though not present. Naturally, nothing can look bread to the sense unless it is bread, or something resembling it. But the Almighty Creator, who is the first and principal cause of all the effects produced by His creatures, has willed that 'appearances' of bread and wine should exist without the existence of either the bread or the wine. These material substances have both ceased to be at the words of consecration; but the same effect is produced upon the sense as if they were still present. No one can dispute that God *can* do this. If bread can affect the sense of man, putting in motion some strain of subtle ether which impinges on the delicate threads of the optic nerve, surely the Lord and Master, for His own purposes, can stir the same forces by immediate causation, or by the ministry of the Angels who guard the Sacrament of Love? And do not say, It is deception. 'Thy arrogance hath deceived thee, and the pride of thy heart.'¹¹ God has not deceived any one. He has taken bread, and said, This is My Body. And the deceivers are those who declare that this is impossible. No one knows what material substance is,¹² and yet you presume to assert that the Body of Christ cannot exist unless you can see It and

¹¹ Jeremias xlix. 16.

¹² 'What do I know,' says Dr. Newman, 'of substance or matter? Just as much as the greatest philosophers and that is nothing at all.' *Apologia*, p. 375.

handle It. It passed through the solid rock of the sealed tomb; It penetrated the closed doors of the cenacle on the evening of the Resurrection;¹⁸ it was seen by St. Paul whilst It was at the right hand of God; and yet objectors can maintain that It cannot be present unless It be palpable and gross, and that It cannot come down upon the Altar without ceasing to be present in the Heavens. No one but the unreflecting and the ignorant will deny that material substance, whatever it is, can exist without producing any effect upon other material substances. Now place, size, colour, position, divisibility—all these affections or phenomena of Matter depend upon the fact that a given material substance is in relation, connection, or communication with other substances. And if the power of God interposes the bar of a miracle, and suspends such relation and intercommunion, a substance will then exist which will be as impervious to human sense as a Spirit is; which will be affected by the prison walls of other Matter, and by the rush and the whirl of the corporeal forces of the world, as little as the serene Angels who walked through Sodom, destroyed the armies of Sennacherib, or opened the prison gates for Peter. The truth is, that people are taught in these days to consider that things are *nothing but appearances*. A bodily substance, say the philosophers, is a bundle of experiences; this is their phrase, and it means that if you add together the effects produced by a given substance upon your senses, and label the sum with a name, that is the whole Substance, and there is

¹⁸ John xx. 26.

nothing else. A theory like this is, I admit, fatal to the sacred Truth we are considering. But it is not likely the world will ever knowingly and deliberately adopt a view which comes to this—that nothing exists except one's own feelings; and if this were the place, I could show you how even its most influential patrons have begun to qualify it. Those who hold that Things are really the causes of what the senses feel must admit that Things and their effects can be separated, and must listen to the word of Revelation when it asserts that Jesus Christ is present in the Sacrament, though the eye of man sees Him not.

Let me be pardoned for dwelling on matters which to simple faith will seem superfluous. The Real Presence is the most awful question of fact at present in the world. One of two things must be true: either an enormous majority of all the Christians of the world and of all the centuries since the Crucifixion, have lived and are living in superstitious darkness, or else the greater number of our own countrymen hurry about their daily work, write their books and newspapers, and read what is written, whilst utterly ignoring the Presence in their midst of the Lord of Heaven and Earth incarnate! No one can be brought to the Truth unless the Father lead him; but, from a human point of view, the first thing required to put men upon the track of the Truth is to induce them not to think the Truth absurd. And for ourselves, who sometimes think, in the heat of our faith, that we can dispense with efforts at explanation, is it not true that every fresh thought which we think out on such a mystery

as the Eucharist is a new glory to God and a new light to ourselves, just as some priceless diamond sparkles the more the oftener we hold it in the sun?

There is a chapter in St. John's Gospel which only requires one word to be supplied from the other Gospels to make it full of thrilling light. It is the thirteenth. It opens with these words: 'Jesus, having loved His own who are in the world, loved them to the end.' It relates the washing of the feet, of which our Lord tells Peter that he shall 'presently know' what it means. It contains that singular burst of feeling, which followed immediately that Judas left the supper-room: 'Now is the Son of Man glorified!' And it concludes with the great commandment of Love: 'That you love one another as I have loved you.' What is the meaning of these multiplied references made by Jesus at this moment to His Love and His Glory? It is true He was about to lay down His life for His friends; but this chapter seems to read like the words of one who *has given* a gift. Jesus seems to say, Behold what I have done for your love; see how I am now glorified! And the word 'glory' in St. John most commonly means the exhibition of supernatural power.¹⁴ If we remember that this chapter covers the moment of the institution of the Blessed Sacrament, it suddenly glows as with the kindling of a fire. The love that prompted the suffering of the Cross was not satisfied until it had made that sacrifice perpetual; and when afterwards Jesus exclaims in prayer, 'The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them,'¹⁵ do we

¹⁴ John i. 14.

¹⁵ Ib. xvii. 22.

not see that He has given to His ministers the same supernatural power which He has that very hour so stupendously displayed Himself?

For the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist means the continuance to the end of time of the Incarnate Word's sojourn on the earth, and the perpetual renewal of the Sacrifice of the Cross. It means that Redemption and Sanctification are brought to the very doors of every frail and sinful man and woman, and that Love is not content with buying us at a great price, but is busy going to and fro among the souls He has bought. The great fountain, open to the house of David, is full, and free to all; but there stands One beside it, under the plane-tree which shadows it over, and He cries to the souls of men: 'All you that thirst, come to the waters; and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat.'¹⁶

The Mass is celebrated by nearly every Catholic Priest every day of his life. The Priest has been ordained by the imposition of the Bishop's hands, and empowered to do what no one can do by his own power but Jesus Christ Himself. Clothed in mysterious robes, he takes his place before an altar hallowed by prayer and holy unction, and by the bones of saints. He takes the blessed Bread and Wine; he utters the words of power; and then, in that instant, the Lamb lies on the stone of the altar, 'as it were slain.'¹⁷ There is no knife, no blood, no Cross, no physical death; yet there is a true and real Sacrifice; this we believe with divine faith. The Sacrifice, as far as we

¹⁶ Isaiah lv. 1.

¹⁷ Apoc. v. 6.

may be permitted to explain it, lies in the stupendous annihilation or humiliation, equivalent to destruction, which the Sacred Humanity undergoes by virtue of its coming to exist in a sacramental state under the lowly appearances of bread and wine. But it is also, by divine ordinance, a commemoration and a setting forth of the Sacrifice of the Cross. First, the Body becomes present in the Priest's hands—Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity, as it is in Heaven; then the Blood is separated from the Body, not really, for that took place once for all on Calvary, but mystically and in figure. Thus the Mass commemorates the Crucifixion; it is a Sacrifice in which the same chief Priest, Jesus Christ (by the hands of a minister), offers in sacrifice the same Victim; though the manner of the Sacrifice is different. On the Cross He was offered as He naturally existed, a mortal passible Man, whom the nails and the lance could pierce; in the Mass He is in His sacramental state, immortal and impassible, whom no weapon can touch but the sword of His own word.

The Sacrifice, then, which the Christian Priest offers in the person of His Lord and Master, is as mighty and august a Sacrifice as that of Calvary itself; for it is, in essence, the same. Its efficacy no human words can definitely measure. It is not an efficacy which is acquired by a new meritorious act of Jesus Christ; He merited in the 'days of His flesh;' He merits now no longer. The fountain is full; in the Mass it simply overflows. It overflows like the river of the earthly Paradise, in four floods to the four quarters of the world. The first flood is the Glory of the Supreme

God; the second is the thanksgiving of man to his Creator; the third is the grace of penance and remission of sin and sin's punishment; the fourth, the gifts of grace and the blessings of this life and the next. Two of these torrents of abundance fall upon mankind; upon the whole world, the just and the unjust; more plentifully upon those who are present, or who are the occasion of the Mass being said; still more largely on those for whom it is specially offered; and most copiously of all upon the soul of the happy and favoured Minister of Jesus Christ, whose privilege it is—a privilege which Angels might envy—to handle and 'dispense the Mysteries' of God. He stands at the Altar, a 'separated' and a chosen man. No purity is too great, no fervour too deep, for the mighty act that he is privileged to do. The people kneel around, not offering, yet joining in the Sacrifice. They know what it means. The Priest's vesture, the strange tongue, the silence, the air of mystery and exclusion—none of these things can surprise them or offend them. They know that the Mass is meant to work a great effect, and not simply to edify *them*. They know that it is a solemn act with stupendous consequences, and they follow it with fear and trembling. They stand as at the mountain-foot, whilst the clouds roll across the mountain, and the lightning and the thunder are the liturgy, and the trumpet, the voice of adoration and praise. And they bless God, and ask themselves what they shall give to Him for all He hath given to them. They assist at Mass to pay their debt of worship to Him, and to make a return for their creation, redemption, and

preservation. They come to Mass to obtain the grace of penance, and the forgiveness of punishment. They kneel down at the Sacrifice to obtain all the blessings they stand in need of, for themselves, the Church, the country, their children, their friends, and all the world.

Thus does our great High Priest offer Himself in that perpetual 'clean oblation' of which Malachy spoke. But He has instituted and ordained another rite now that He abides upon the earth. In the Old Law they ate of the victims which were slain; and this to draw nearer to each other in love and confidence, by partaking in a common solemnity and eating of a common food. Who could have guessed that the Christian was to eat of the stupendous Sacrifice of the Law of Grace? Communion is the completion of Sacrifice. But the Christian communion is no mere symbol or ceremony. It is the partaking of the Bread of Life. Our life, as we have seen, consists in this—that we have abiding in us Grace, or the Spirit which filled Jesus. All our Grace comes from Him; He is the Vine, we the branches into which the sap must flow, or else we die. All the Sacraments are means for obtaining Grace or increasing Grace, for the Blood of our Saviour flows in them all. But the Eucharist, since it contains the Fountain of all Grace, has an effect which is peculiar to itself. In the Paradise which we lost by our forefather's transgression there stood a wondrous tree. It was called the Tree of Life. It did not confer the gift of life; but men and women were to eat of its fruit, and by eating to be gifted with an immortality which sin alone could prevail against. The holy Eucharist is the Tree of the Life

of Grace. Standing in the midst of the new Paradise, the 'watered garden,' which is the Church of Christ, it preserves life to those who eat. The Blessed Sacrament does not confer life on those who are dead in sin ; there are other sacraments for that. But it is the food, the life-blood of the living. It happens sometimes that a fire kindled in the fields, when the air is sluggish and the weather thick, languishes and dies down ; but if the wind springs up, and the pure ether pours in from the regions of the north, dispersing the dense and clinging mists, then the dying brands leap into life again, and the tongues of flame dart upwards to the sky. There is no higher act of the soul in this life than to leap up in the flames of love towards its God. It is a lofty act ; and a life of such acts is a life angelic rather than a life of man. Passion, frailty, ignorance—the fogs and the noisome vapours of the clay that makes man up—put out the fire of Charity. And the Eucharist is the keen, fresh, and vital air which blows from lands of mountains and of sunshine, laden with the fragrance of the morning and the breath of pines and evergreens, bringing hope, elasticity, and joy. It blows through silent cloisters, on hearts which watch daily for its coming ; and the noblest souls of this world, the contemplatives hidden with Christ in God, live daily through it a life of more ecstatic love. It breathes over the desert of the world, freshening the hearts of those who are working in the world, and gradually helping them to love God above all other things. It fans the dying Charity of those who perchance are in danger of losing Faith and Hope. It strings up the nerves of young men and

young women, of boys and girls, on whom temptation has a strong hold, and keeps them from week to week, if not always in God's love, at least in God's fear. Everywhere, whenever the Christian soul turns towards the Table of the Lord, from whence that good wind blows, the passions of the flesh are weakened, the seven deadly sins wither down to the roots, and the spiritual tempter shudders and keeps off. We all know it. And therefore the Priest in his pulpit cries out every Sunday, Come to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. The God-fearing man or woman says, solemnly and seriously, I must keep regular in my Communions, or I fall. Sinners look up to holy Communion as the seal and sanction of their reconciliation. Little children, as soon as they can think, are taken by the hand and brought near the sanctuary, and told in tender words as much as they can bear about the gift which their Saviour has ready for them when they shall be duly fitted to come to His banquet. Thus the holy Eucharist keeps up the Life which Jesus Christ came to give the world abundantly. 'This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of it, he may not die.'¹⁸ Thus the Sacred Body of the world's Saviour touches the weak and frail flesh of heavily-burdened humanity, and by that touch revives it and refreshes it. Our body, by the emotions and instincts which have their root in the flesh, is the chief prompter of our sins. Jesus Christ has not only willed that the bodies of His servants shall become the temples of the Holy Spirit,¹⁹ and so members of Himself, but He deigns to

¹⁸ John vi. 50.¹⁹ 1 Cor. vi. 15, 19.

consecrate this union by a Sacramental contact. Such a union and contact would tend to make them like unto His own sacred flesh ; and although the consummation of this is reserved for the life to come, yet it begins here below. It begins in that purity, self-mastery, and sense of responsibility with which the Christian feels urged to treat a body, in which the Sacrament of loving union has already implanted the principle and pledge of glorious immortality. 'He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath life everlasting, and I will raise him up at the last day.'²⁰

The Abiding Presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Eucharist is the explanation of many things in the Catholic Church, which those without find it difficult to understand, and which even we who are within do not sufficiently think about. It explains how the Mass is the sun and the centre of all our worship. It explains the form of our churches, which we divide, as far as we can, into three parts : the sanctuary, where the altar stands, the presbytery or choir for the clergy, and the body of the church for the faithful people. How striking and sad it is to see the old Welsh churches still standing and testifying, by their very look and shape, that they were never meant for what they have now been made ! It is the key to those mysterious rites and ceremonies at the Altar at which strangers who enter Catholic churches gaze with wonder, and which they admire or despise with equal ignorance of what they mean. Vestments, lights, ranks and grades of ministers, genuflexions and signs of the cross—they are all part of

²⁰ John vi. 55.

a Liturgy; and a Liturgy means a solemn act of sacrificial worship. There is not a rite performed at the altar, or a robe worn in the sanctuary, which has not a deep meaning and a venerable history. And the Blessed Sacrament explains why the Catholic Church, though content with poverty, is fond of outward pomp. It was Judas, if you remember, who murmured because Mary broke the box of costly ointment to anoint her Saviour's feet. There is nothing on this earth, to those who have faith, so like a foretaste or feeling of Heaven as a grand High Mass or Procession of the Blessed Sacrament. The Church's children feel that the Presence of Him who abides with them deserves all that they can do to show their love. They give Him their hearts first, and then, as far as may be, their money; their rich things, their time, and their zealous care. They love to see their churches beautiful, their altars sumptuously robed in the mystical white linen and the precious stuffs which symbolise the garments of His Body; and they can have no greater privilege than to sacrifice some costly thing which may minister to His honour, and be near His Sacred Body. And there is not a poor man, however hard the times may be, who will not spare a penny to testify faith and gratitude for the Gift which makes this world such a different world to him.

The only reflection which can mar the joy and holy exultation with which Catholics speak of the Abiding Presence of Jesus is, that so many of us are lax and backward in recognising it as we ought. The Blessed Sacrament has a very small place in the lives of most

of us, and a very slight hold upon our hearts. Mass, even on Sundays, is not always attended; on weekdays the Holy Sacrifice is offered in almost empty churches. Communion is neglected; many receive Jesus Christ only once or twice a year; others never. The rite of honour and prayer which we call Benediction, is little cared for, except perhaps on the Sundays. All day long the churches stand desolate and abandoned, with no living thing to pay homage to the Presence, and only the little light of the sanctuary lamp to show that He is there. And yet, as I have said, to the soul that has living Faith, the worship of the Blessed Sacrament is the beginning of Heaven. When John the Apostle, on that Lord's day in Patmos, heard himself called by the mighty trumpet-voice, he turned and saw a glorious vision. Seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, One like to the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to His feet, and girt about the breast with a golden girdle. And His head and His hairs were white, as white wool and as snow, and His eyes were as a flame of fire. And He had in His right hand seven stars.²¹ Methinks I have seen the shadow of this Apocalyptic vision here down on the earth. We need not go far to find it. We need not go where wealth and national recognition and every element of grandeur make a Corpus-Christi procession, even in this modern Europe; a greater pageant than the world can show. But we may thread our way through the streets of a great working town, and stop at a door where the poor are going, as if it were their

²¹ Apoc. i. 12.

home ; and we may enter a wide room where the poor man is kneeling on his way from his work, and the poor woman, who has snatched a moment from hard care, and the child, whose best idea of home is that solemn quiet chapel. We may take our place among them, and look at the humble altar where zeal and sacrifice have done their best ; and there, when the lights shine around, and the robed Priest bows down, and the incense rises, and the children's voices chant, we may see with reverent eye, on that lowly throne, One like to the Son of Man—golden, and white, and shining ; the gold not very bright to the outward eye, perhaps, and the glory not overpowering ; but the scene is a reality, and the heart can feel it. For, after we have read, and spoken, and discussed, yes, and prayed and suffered—still it remains that we kneel and adore the Blessed Sacrament before we can truly know who is Jesus Christ.

THE SPIRIT OF FAITH;

OR,

What must I do to believe?

I

BELIEF A NECESSITY.

THE prevalence of the present warm discussions on Faith and Reason, on Belief, Knowledge, and Opinion, has doubtless arisen from many partial causes. It is partly that able and clear-seeing men have been trying to convince the crowd of what they see themselves—that it is inconsistent and foolish to hold fast to one set of beliefs whilst rejecting another for which there is quite as good ground and proof. It is partly that the experience of at least three hundred years has convinced inquirers that a revelation—especially an elaborate and complex revelation—without a perpetual living voice and tradition to guard and interpret it, must be utterly inefficient and must surely crumble away. But it is also because men of wide and candid views have begun to feel that Belief of some kind will always be an absolute necessity for the human race. Unless every man and woman is to be a long-lived, gifted, leisured, candid, philosophic inquirer, some men and women must live by Belief. The fruit of this conviction has been various,

Some teachers of mankind have anxiously attempted to show men what or whom to believe. Others have assured them they may believe without contradicting their reason. And others, again, have contented themselves with demolition and invective, speaking some hard truths and much crude error, loudly proclaiming that they will accept nothing but what they can see, and having no message for the masses except exhortation to make the most of the world they live in.

It is not my intention in these discourses to prove the existence of revelation, or of the Church of Christ. It is most useful and necessary to do both on occasion.

But I am convinced that what many souls require is, not proof, but preparation. The evidence before them is plain enough ; what they lack is the power to see. And though this power is a gift of God's grace, it is connected with a certain predisposition of heart and mind which we may call the Spirit of Faith. My object is to illustrate what one must *do* in order to believe ; what moral and mental preparation we must have if we do not wish to walk blind in the midst of light. There are those who do not believe through indifference ; who will not believe through mistaken pride or independence ; who cannot believe (as they affirm), however much they long for Belief. And there are those also who do believe, and yet whose faith is in danger, not so much because they cannot prove it, or get it proved if need be, but because with them the moral and intellectual groundwork of faith is not firm ; because the spirit of free thought, so-called progress, and undevout criticism has reached even the inside of the fold.

In this and the four succeeding discourses it is my intention, then, to endeavour to explain what is meant by Faith and Belief, and what are their relations with the reasoning faculty of man, with his will, and with the supernatural grace of God ; in other words, why men ought to believe and must believe ; whether men can believe if they will ; whether Belief has anything to do with the ordinary acts of a man's reasoning faculty ; and whether Belief is influenced in any way by that direct action of God which we call by the name of grace.

'Faith' is a word that has had a long history in this world. It has been the watchword of many a fight, the motive of many a sacrifice, the burden of many a prayer. Millions have held fast to Faith in their lives ; thousands have testified to Faith by their deaths. Now Faith, or Belief, in its primary and elementary conception, is the acceptance of information on trust—on the word of another. If I have never been in London, I accept the fact that there is such a place as London, and I accept it on the word of another. If I have never tested the strength of wood and iron myself, still I confidently enter a railway carriage, trusting to what others have investigated and pronounced. But if I have visited London, and if I have a sufficient experimental knowledge of the materials used in carriage building then I do not *believe* these things, but I *know* them.

It is evident, then, at the very outset of our inquiries, that Belief must, of its own nature, play a very important part in human affairs. Consider the enormous number of things which must be taken on trust—on the word of another. The eye, the ear, the touch, are very

limited faculties. That portion of this vast universe which they can tell us of is very narrow indeed. A man would never eat his food, or set his foot to the ground, or carry on any intercourse with his fellow man, if he refused to believe. He takes it on trust that his bread is not poisoned ; that beasts and materials may be relied on ; that there are places for him to correspond with which he has never seen. The bond of civilisation is society ; man cannot rise to a civilised life, or keep in it, without the help and intercourse of other men. But society is held together by mutual trust and confidence. No man, as long as he is sane and sober, even demands ocular proof for everything he is called upon to accept. For things past he believes the word of his father and mother, or the accounts of those who have written histories. For things distant he accepts the report of his friends, of his correspondents, of the public journals. He trusts his tradesmen ; he confides in the word of the mechanic, the man of business, the lawyer, the doctor. If he refuses to believe, he must shut himself up ; he must live a life that is no life, but only a savage existence ; or rather he must soon cease to live ; for unless a man believes he must die. It is obvious to say, that on these subjects the wisest man is he who trusts the least. But this is an exaggeration, which merely suggests the truth, that whilst a man finds it convenient to believe he must still exercise caution. The most cautious must always find it necessary to take upon trust infinitely more than he can examine and prove for himself.

Now it is not easy to imagine anyone objecting to

believe merely because he considers Belief to be an unworthy form of knowledge, or to be no knowledge at all. We cannot understand a person saying, 'If I cannot find out a thing for myself, I had rather not know it at all than take it on the word of another.' This would be mere stupidity. Information which comes on the word of another is real information in quite as true a sense as information which we derive from our own senses. If my friend or my newspaper—sources which I know I can trust—inform me that prices have risen in New York, or that a certain substance hitherto unknown is good for food, or that the weather was fine or otherwise on such a day, at such a place, my information is surely as real, as solid, as useful, as if I had myself visited foreign lands and tasted strange substances. There is only one question, and that is in regard to the trustworthiness of my sources. But that supposed, I need not hesitate, waver, or doubt. Nay, more. It frequently happens that under these circumstances I *cannot doubt*. There are many kinds of testimony, and many instances in which testimony is employed when the testimony is of such a sort as to compel assent. Let us suppose, for example, that a trustworthy friend walks into your house, and mentions that he left his home at such an hour, or that he met and spoke with such and such a person; you are obliged to believe him. You cannot help having that much additional knowledge. It is true that, by an extraordinarily violent mental effort, proceeding from some strong prejudice or prepossession, you may so confuse yourself as to doubt at last. But with your mind in a state of quietness and

candour, on the first reception of the information you assent ; the very make and texture of the human mind compels you. It is no more possible for you, with your senses in their healthy state, to help seeing trees and houses when they stand before you and you look towards them in the daylight, than it is for your minds to doubt upon due and sufficient testimony. In short, Belief is as real a means of information, as satisfactory to the mind, and as cogent and effective in compelling assent, as any kind of knowledge whatever.

But I will go further, and say, that in many cases Belief is practically a much more useful kind of information than personal knowledge or experience. I do not mean to say that a person can be more certain of anything than of what he sees and hears and tests. But, in the first place, as we have already seen, it is impossible to test or apply our senses to one hundredth part of the things we must accept ; and, in the second, what is required for practical life is *conclusions*, not facts or bits of experience. This is a very important consideration. An investor, for instance, wants to know the latest quotations on the Stock Exchange ; he does not particularly want to know the hundreds of little bits of fact that enable a reporter to telegraph these quotations to the newspapers. If he were a reporter himself, he would have to go and use his eyes and ears. Perhaps he would use them very badly ; the occupation might not suit him at all ; and he might be wrong in his practical summary and conclusions. But he goes to his newspaper and believes, and he has all he practically wants. Or, again, suppose that a man is ill in health,

and wishes to know what to do. It is perhaps conceivable, and within the limits of physical possibility, that he should personally make such researches in chemistry, physiology, and medicine as would enable him to find out. But the thing is practically impossible; that is to say, it is impossible to all but persons possessing such a combination of qualifications as is never found, or only found in the rarest cases. What he does is to consult a doctor, or at the least a book; or he remembers what he has been told before; or he puts together two or three facts and pieces of information acquired from books or instructors, and so decides. And it is to be observed, that the more he trusts to his own inferences (even though these inferences are grounded on what others have told him, as must be the case with most of them) the greater danger is there of his arriving at a false conclusion. The best thing he can do is to choose out an expert, and simply believe him. The truth is, that most of the conclusions of practical life, on which we act every day and must continue to act, are highly complex, and are the results of an enormous amount of observation. We believe, for example, that the water supplied to our houses will not poison us, that the bread in the shops is not unfit for food, that stone will stand the weather better than wood, that foul smells in the streets mean fever; we believe that railroads, banks, docks, shipping are good things; we advocate temperance, or trades-unions, or free trade, or the opposite. And we do this mostly on trust. There is not one man in a thousand of us who is capable of doing otherwise. The average man or woman of the workers

and toilers of this world is not one who can either investigate facts or put them together when found out. Eyes and ears are not sharp enough, brain is not strong enough, life is not long enough, to allow any of us to make out a system, or even to investigate thoroughly and independently one single conclusion. Belief, therefore, is our resource, and we are wise in availing ourselves of Belief. It is the very condition of our daily life. We are like men who must sail over a wide and tossing ocean, and must make no delay ; and we do not take our axes and go into the forest to cut down trees to build us ships ; we do not take our hammers and our appliances and toil for years to make a vessel, that will not sail when it is made ; we do not ransack markets and stores for rigging and outfit ; but we step into a ship that others have made before we wanted it ; we trust plank and cord and mast ; we trust pilot and mariner ; and so we sail the sea of life.

These are general truths, and I have rather stated them than tried to explain them. Yet the statement of simple facts is often the best explanation of such facts. It is undoubtedly of the utmost importance to remember that the nature of man's mind and the conditions under which we live are such that Belief, or the taking of information on trust, must enter largely into our life. But—and here we approach our subject more closely—this important truth, which regards the whole of human life, has a very special application to all matters relating to worship, religion, and morality. Speaking broadly and practically, as we must do when speaking about the mass of mankind, we may say that no religious system

or worship, and no system of morality, is possible without Belief.

In order to see this clearly, it seems to me that it is sufficient to consider for a moment what we mean by religion and morality. Religion means at least this—the acknowledgment of one Supreme Being, our Creator and our Last End, the loving Him with the whole heart, and the serving Him faithfully. Morality means the acknowledgment of a rule of right and wrong in our actions. Now if we grant that the existence of God may be dimly known by unassisted and personal reason, still the necessity for Belief is absolute. Take the attributes of the Supreme Being—our idea of His justice, mercy, purity, or power—and how far could the keenest reason of the longest-lived sage travel unassisted over such boundless regions of investigation? And would two men be found to agree when the investigation was concluded? And must the world be without intelligent belief in a God until long-lived sages have uttered their oracles, and those oracles have been found to agree? Set an ordinary man, with work and business, to find out and demonstrate whether the Supreme Being is infinitely just, or whether there is a future life, and, apart from what he has from revelation, he will not know where to begin. The subject is too deep, and his faculties are too limited. If the matter had been one of eyes and ears, he might at least have made a start. But here he is like a man in a dense fog, who knows not which is the north and which the south. And, moreover, he has not the time which is necessary for such an inquiry. And if he had time

and ability and inclination, yet it might chance—and the chance would be almost a certainty, considering the nature of man's mind and heart—that he would decide, not according to cool reason, but according to his own wish or want. Passion, temperament, character, circumstances, would be ready to prompt him, and to show him what he ought to say. And so there would either be no idea at all about God, or else there would be a chaos of contradictory opinions, whims, fancies, and daring assertions. And this would be true all through the list of those grave subjects which are included under the name of religion—such as the soul, the existence of evil, sin, and suffering. I do not speak of revealed religion; to that we shall come presently. We are here concerned solely with asserting the impossibility of any religion at all for the mass of mankind without Belief. And it would be the same with what we call morality. If men were left to find out, each for himself, the rules of right and wrong, the sacredness of duty, the comparative merits of good deeds, and the essential element of virtue or of vice, we should again have a mere chaos. If every generation or every human being had to start afresh, and investigate whether murder was unlawful, whether theft was morally wrong, or whether to benefit one's neighbour was a good deed, each generation and each man might come to a right conclusion on some broad principles; but many men would certainly not do so; and there would be a shifting uncertainty and haziness about the rules of right and wrong, which would not tend to make this world a

more agreeable place to live in. The mass of men must take their religion and their morality, as they take their daily bread, on trust. And, as a matter of fact, the mass of men have always done so. We need not count the barbarous races which have been, and which even now, perhaps, are, the majority of mankind. We know how they carry on their superstitions, their savage rites, their childish observances, from year to year, from generation to generation, from century to century. They step into the beliefs of their fathers just as they dwell in their fathers' houses or tents ; they take up their tribe's views of God and immortality, as they assume its garb and its weapons, its paint, its feathers, and its war-cry. No one questions, no one doubts. If there is a change, it is because some whimsical chief or despotic king orders them to change ; whether they go on in senseless uniformity or break their tradition by an equally senseless innovation, it is always on trust and in belief. But if we turn from barbarism to comparative civilisation we find it always the same. There are two or three instances, besides Christianity, of religious systems spreading widely among cultured or partially-cultured people. What is called Brahminism is one of the oldest forms of religious belief or practice in the world. The millions of the Indian peninsula adhere to it at this very day. It has had its vicissitudes, its heresies, its sects. But try to reckon the millions who have professed their adherence to it in the wide-spread Eastern lands where it has flourished through the thousands of years during which it has had a name in the world, and you may gather some idea of how men take their religion on trust. Or look at

Buddhism—the senseless Nihilism or Pantheism which contrived, some 2500 years ago, to draw away followers from Brahminism, and whose members have grown to be well-nigh one-third of all the human beings on the earth at this moment. Of all these millions how many units are there who have not taken their opinions, as far as they have any, and their practices, such as they are, from some king's edict, from some preacher's word, from some ascetic's example, or from their father's or their mother's lips? Mahometanism, again, as long as it had any vitality at all, consisted mainly in a blind personal devotion to a man and to a book; the Moslem was and is a 'believer' who accepts a certain cry and practice here on earth, and looks for a hope and a reward in the heavens, because the Prophet and the Koran have said so. And to pass to Christianity, what has turned the best portion of the world to Christianity but belief and trust? and what holds Christians to their profession except the same? It is a point we shall have to discuss more closely later on; but I may remind you here that not only does the Catholic Church uniformly proceed on the idea that men and women must be taught, that they cannot make out their religion or keep their religion unadulterated by their own thought and reflection, and that 'Belief' is the only practical way of getting Christianity into men's minds at all; but it seems to stand to reason that in no other fashion could the workers and strivers, and the little children, get hold of anything like steadfast and working principles of any kind. And this view, let us remember, is far from being upset by an appeal to that form of religious thought

which claims the right to question everything—I mean, to Protestantism even in its most Protestant form. I make bold to say you never met a Protestant, were he as extreme as he could be, provided he held anything at all, who did not hold upon trust and take even his Protestantism at second hand. There may be here and there one who holds very little indeed, and who thinks he has made out for himself what he does hold. If such a one came under my own experience, I feel sure I could show him that even he was going on trust; that his demonstrations were only ‘Belief’ after all. But waiving this, is it not certain that the mass of Protestants get their religion from their catechisms, their preachers, their newspapers, or their mothers? Is it not certain that if a Protestant were ordered to strip off all that he had received from another’s hand, and to retain only what he had won and woven for himself, he would stand in a sorry plight? Men delight, it is true, in doubting, in calling in question established truth, and in setting themselves above authority; and, whatever the achievement is worth, they no doubt succeed in doing so. But they can only attack details—a point here and a point there. They always retain far more than they reject. They tear off shreds and they pick them to pieces; but they still go clothed. Or if by long and slow process men skilful of speech and sophism have persuaded the unlearned man to part with the garments his fathers handed down to him, it is only to make him put on clothes of a different make, but clothes all the same. Scepticism, or the rejection of all definite truth, may be theoretically possible, but not with the

masses of mankind. And therefore they must have Belief.

And here comes on the great and vital question. If men must have Belief, or else have no religion, what must they do to believe safely and usefully? Is there anyone whom they can trust? Has Providence made them what they are, with such necessities and such deficiencies, and then left them to shift for themselves?

As I have already said, it is my object, not so much to prove, or to engage in controversy, as to explain and prepare. I have to point out the Spirit of Belief—what you must be, what you must do, what you must have, and whither you must bend your gaze, if you would believe.

In the first place, then, you must see that it is highly probable that God would speak, or make a revelation. A man who is expecting a thing will be sure not to miss it when it comes. The sailor who keeps his eye anxiously on the horizon will catch sight of the ship he wants to see the moment her masthead is above the horizon. The watcher of the skies, who peers in the night hours through his telescope for the coming star, will see it and note it the moment its edge is projected on his glass. The child who watches at the window for its father in the dusk, or who listens from a sick-bed for his step, will know the instant he is there. If there is a God at all, no one can doubt that He must be a God who cares for and who loves the things that He has made, and who loves most and cares most for the beings whom He has endowed with a reason to know Him and a will which is bound to love Him more than any other thing. He could not be a God who should

sit in the heavens—in some serene regions above the changes and the storms of the earth and the air—and take no heed to the hearts in which He had implanted the divine fire of a longing love for Himself. To have made rational creatures at all was a wonder that only His own limitless power can explain, and that mysterious love which the Infinite can shed upon the finite. And, having made them, why should He stay His hand at their birth? Why should He leave them in the conditions which the mere fact of being made involved? Why should He not go on as lavishly as He had begun; and having gifted them with being, for no reason beyond the effusiveness of His love, adorn them with gifts above being and nature, out of the same constraining yet most free generosity? When the rich man builds him a house on a spot which he has chosen, he builds because he chooses; the place, the view, the wood, the water, and the air have pleased him, and he builds that he may live there. And having built, he does not turn his back on the palace which his love has imagined and his treasure created, but he dwells there and spends himself upon it still. As he made it and it is his, so he loves to adorn and glorify it. Whither should his fancy turn or his plenteous wealth flow except to the spot where he first felt that his heart could be satisfied? So, if God has made us, there is no cause to wonder at His wishing to do still more for us. He was not necessitated to do more. But it seems to me that when we contemplate Him creating, we know, we feel, that He will not stop there. Creation itself, which reason inexorably proves, is such a stupendous ‘reve-

lation,' so to speak, that the mind of the earnest man, having somewhat grasped its immense significance, stands waiting with an awestruck certainty for those further demonstrations which he knows will come, of that ineffable motive cause which (if we dare speak in such a human way) urged the Infinite to utter the fiat which made the worlds. In one word, from the mere fact that God has made man it is extremely probable that He would help him, teach him, benefit him, more than his mere nature could require or expect. And it would seem that it was for this reason He left in man's soul a capacity, a receptivity, a sort of vague want, which called for more knowledge and more power. The want was not imperious. Man *could* have lived without more, but not *well* lived. The palace of the Great Builder had been fashioned with spaces and heights, with great vaulted halls and mighty foundations for towers and pinnacles, which awaited, in dumb show of supplication, new plans and new lavishness—the colour, the gold, the glory of a transformation. Man's soul, limited as it is, has a vague yearning to know God better; a vague vision of secrets beyond matter, beyond life; a burning wish for immortality, and a panting restlessness to know what will come when the body shall be dissolved. It cannot find out much for itself. It can, perhaps, make out a glimpse here and an inference there. It may spend the years of its allotted mortality in researches, and may make a fresh step each year it seeks. But it cannot get the key of the mysteries which lie around it; it cannot pierce the veil which hangs down on the other side of the grave; and if it find the heavenly fire and

light its torch at the flame, death comes, and the torch drops in the dust, and the light is lost again to the world. And God has allowed the human race to feel this. Although, as we shall presently see, He never did leave mankind without a supernatural revelation, yet there have been periods and races—long periods and widespread races—in which man's own wrong-doing has obscured that revelation. From the records of these times and races we know that the human heart, left to itself, when not brutalised by passion and bad custom, is uneasy without revelation and grace. The best minds sighed for God. Human nature, represented by what was noblest among men, groped¹ hither and thither, seeking for God, if perchance it should find Him. Like the Hebrew singer in the days of his dark fortune, it cried to God from the wilderness, 'O God, my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day. For Thee my soul hath thirsted; for Thee my flesh, O how many ways! In a desert land, and where there is no way and no water.'² If we had not Christ's light, such would be our condition and our cry, unless we were grovelling on the earth in sensual sin. And therefore I have said, that the mere fact of being what we are seems to point to the certainty that God will interfere some way to help us, teach us, and raise us up.

And this He has done by giving us what is called revelation. When we speak of revelation, we mean that God has spoken to us, either Himself or by His ministers—His prophets, apostles, or evangelists. We mean that He has told us things which our reason,

¹ Acts xvii. 27.

² Ps. lxii. 1-3.

though He gave us our reason, could or would never have found out for itself. We mean that He has given us information which we are to take upon trust--trusting to Him. This information is of two kinds; or rather it regards two classes of subjects. First, there are those matters about which we should have been able to find out something for ourselves even without His supernatural revelation; for instance, His own existence, the spirituality of our souls, and our immortality; as also what are the broad rules of right and wrong. On these matters we should have been able to know *something* by the light of our reason. But what we knew would have been so fragmentary, so much mixed up with error, so difficult to get at, and so hard to keep, that practically the mass of men would hardly have known it all. And therefore God has revealed much on these subjects, and told us clearly and simply so much precious truth about Himself and His attributes, about our souls and the life to come, that the poor man and woman, and the little child, have no difficulty in coming to the knowledge of what will guide their lives aright. But there is another class of subjects on which God has spoken to us. He has revealed to us—and here the word ‘revealed’ is used in its full and complete meaning—things so deep and grand, things so hidden and so impossible to predict, that only Himself could have revealed them. They are called mysteries; and they comprise such truths as the Three Persons in the Godhead, the taking flesh of the Eternal Son, the coming of the Holy Ghost, the beatific vision after death, and other ‘profound things of God.’

This is what we mean by Revelation; and we take it upon trust from God. He has spoken, and we believe; and once we believe, we know it as well as if we had made it out for ourselves; nay, as I remarked above, practically we know it a great deal better.

But you will say, Are we sure that God *has* spoken?

Two classes of persons may ask this question: those who really doubt whether God has spoken, and those who already believe, but who want to be able to give an answer to those who ask them. Are we sure, then, that God has spoken?

I answer that we are quite sure. You must admit that it is, in the first place, highly probable that God would wish to speak to man, and reveal to him things which his natural reason would not have found out, but which, nevertheless, his reason had a dumb blind knowledge of—as a blind man has a knowledge of the sun. You must admit also that Almighty God could easily make His wishes or His revelation known to man. The God who made us would surely find it possible and easy to speak to us when He chose. There are many whose unwillingness to believe arises from not seeing how likely it is that God would speak, and how easy it is for Him to speak if He chooses. But if we fully admit the probability and the possibility that God has spoken, we find at hand a positive proof that He has spoken. There is a book called the New Testament. Looking at that book, not as inspired, but merely as an ordinary history, we cannot doubt, first, that a man called Jesus Christ did once live; secondly, that He asserted He was sent by God to teach God's revelation; thirdly,

that He worked great miracles in proof of what He said; fourthly, that He rose again from the dead; and fifthly, that a great number of persons accepted what He said and believed in Him. Now I know that a few learned men have denied some of these things. But the greater number of learned men accept them. And as for those who deny them, it is quite clear that they do so because they deny both the probability and the possibility that God should speak to man; and in many cases it is because they do not really admit there is a true God at all. I boldly assert that no man who opens the New Testament, previously admitting the probability and possibility of revelation, will hesitate to accept the facts which the New Testament relates. And if he does not admit the probability and possibility of revelation—that is, of God's speaking to man in a way beyond the information given by mere natural reason—he cannot admit there is an infinitely wise, good, and powerful God; and therefore he cannot admit a God at all.

It is a fact, therefore, that God has spoken. I could begin from this present century, and show you how in every century—nay, in every quarter of a century—up to the time of the New Testament, when Christ Jesus lived, there is testimony that He brought God's revelation to man. A thing which we can trace up like this is certain. It has been handed down from age to age.

We began by saying that men must believe a great deal—that is, take a great deal on trust—or they could not live in this world. We saw how especially this was true in the case of worship and religion. Belief, then, which is so necessary for mankind, is also possible for

them. The great Almighty Maker who formed them has also spoken to them ; and their wisest course, their bounden duty, is to believe His word. If they must take their religion in a great measure on trust, He it is whom they are to trust. The Eternal Teacher sits and teaches for evermore. Human princes and human sages have commanded and have searched out, and men have been none the better or the wiser. But to those who have ears to hear the voice of the Lord there is light and wisdom and peace.

II.

THE NEW-TESTAMENT TEACHING AS TO WHAT FAITH IS.

The obedience of faith. ROM. i. 5.

IN the last discourse I explained what it is to believe, and I showed that Belief, in religious matters, means taking upon trust a large number of truths relating to God, His worship and His law ; and taking them on trust because He has spoken. It might seem to some that it was not necessary to take so many words to explain this. But to me it seems that there are numbers of people in this country who either do not believe because they think Belief is a slavery, and unworthy of them, or only half believe, because they have a sort of fear that Belief will not bear investigation, and that the less you think about your Belief the more likely you are not to quarrel with it. Therefore it was useful to show that Belief is a necessity for mankind, especially in religious matters, and to point out briefly (what would take volumes to develop fully) the complete certainty we have that God Himself has spoken to the world and left us His Word.

You may, perhaps, expect that now I shall proceed to show you where and how God's voice is to be heard, and to explain the authority of Holy Scripture, and of the teaching Church which is revealed in Holy Scrip-

ture. This, however, is not precisely my purpose in these instructions. Doubtless it is most important that we should see that God has left His Church as the depositary, the guardian, and the interpreter of His divine revelation, which would otherwise be useless for the masses of mankind. And doubtless also, during the ensuing remarks, I may throw some light on the Church's claims, which will tend to conciliate those who dispute them. But my chief purpose at present is to inquire, not so much where God's revelation is, as what sort of a revelation it is; in what sort of a spirit we should seek it, and what we should do in order to make it out for ourselves, and get hold of it. To look for revelation is to look for something divine; and to attain it we must understand something of God's ways. Faith—for that is the name by which we call belief in revelation—is a gift, an act of the mind which very much depends on the state of the mind itself. We must, therefore, examine in what shape God will speak or will appear. And we shall find the answer to our question chiefly in the pages of the New Testament.

It sometimes happens that a man who walks out into the country to look for some house to which he has been directed, comes upon it and goes by it without knowing that it is the one he is in search of. And sometimes, after hearing about a place for years, and for years longing to visit it, when at last we get there and actually see it, our anticipations are disappointed, and the reality is very little like what we expected to find. It is a great thing for a searcher to be sure of what he is looking for. And when the human heart is searching for its God,

there is a special care and attention necessary in order not to take some false image of God for God Himself. The mightiness and majesty of Jehova is utterly and infinitely different from the mightiness and grandeur of man. God cannot show Himself as He is; for if He did, the heavens and the earth would flee away, and be no more. But, at the same time, when He does reveal Himself, He does not ordinarily show Himself in the form and the trappings of that glory and power which are human. He does not want to be taken for His own creatures. He does not wish to be measured by the height of those infinitesimal mole-hills of the earth which man takes for great mountains. If He cannot show Himself in His own glory, at least he will not put on the glory of man. He would rather choose the things 'that are not'—the things which men call weakness, baseness, poverty, and lowliness—that so His real glory and real power might stand the less chance of being misunderstood by those who had eyes to see. A man who has accustomed himself to call things by the name which the undisciplined and sinful human heart is in the habit of calling them will easily pass by God, even at the moment when God is very near him. When Elias stood on the top of Carmel the Lord passed by him. There was a great and strong wind before the Lord, overthrowing the mountains and breaking the rocks in pieces; the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind, an earthquake; and the Lord was not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake, a fire; the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire, the whistling of a gentle air. And Elias heard the gentle wind, and he

knew it was the Lord. And he came out from the cave, where the storm and the thunder had driven him, and he covered his face with his mantle, and stood there at the cave's threshold listening to the words of the Lord.¹ He is the type of the heart that knows where to see God. But most men act otherwise. They take the flash and the noise and the rush of some earth-storm for the manifestation of God. They are the men who in olden times could not understand why Noe worked so patiently for a hundred years at the Ark. If they had met a wandering Eastern tribe in the deserts of Arabia carrying the Ark of the Covenant, they would have despised them and passed by. If they had found their way to Bethlehem on the night of the Nativity, they would have thought they had made a mistake. They were the men who met Jesus Christ by the lake of Galilee, in the streets of Jerusalem, under the porches of the temples, and saw in Him nothing but a mechanic, or an enthusiast, or a man possessed by the devil. They are those who in all ages have cried out 'Foolishness!' when they have had the Gospel preached to them. For God is 'a hidden God.'² It is His pleasure to disguise Himself. Yet let us beware what we say. Which, after all, would be the more complete disguise—that God should wrap Himself in the semblance of miserable human pomp and greatness, or should come, as He does come, lowly, meek, and poor? Hath not the mind eyes to see the true greatness under the humble outside? Nay, is it not true, is it not certain from the story of the past, that the poor and despised instruments to whom God has

¹ 3 Kings xix. 11.² Isaiah xlv. 15.

entrusted Himself upon the earth are ever and again found conquering the power and pride of the world; crushing, breaking up, pushing aside, or subduing to themselves the forces which seemed to be so mighty and so absolute? If we look aright, we can tell the power of God under its seeming disguises. But the wisdom which does not fix its end in the heavens, and which lives in this world as if this world were its home and its final destiny, and which calls things by the names of the earth, is sure to go astray when it begins, as it thinks, to look for God and God's ways.

The truth of this is never more clearly seen than in the case of multitudes in this country who are looking for, or perhaps think that they have found, what they call the Gospel. They take certain big and sounding names from the world's vocabulary, and measuring by them the revelation of God, they accept as much as they can cover with these names. Wealth and material power are names which earthly wisdom bows before; and is it not true they go a long way in helping men to choose their form of Christianity? But if you say these are vulgar notions, and educated and refined minds are far above measuring truth by power to strike and power to pay, I say that there are other words as dangerous and as false. Liberty, Independence, Progress, Free Inquiry—these are some of the notions which numbers of people bring to test the Gospel by. If they find any form of religion, like the Catholic Church, in which these names are not held in high esteem (at least as understood by them), then, like the Jews of old, they are straightway 'scandalised.' It cannot be true. It can-

not be meant for them. Freedom is a glorious privilege. Progress is the inalienable birthright of the human race. Independence is the prerogative of man's noble nature. And being full of views like these, they settle down with such scraps of God's word as seem to suit.

It is no wonder if men who look for God's truth through such glasses as these do not see it in the Catholic Church. They have altogether misconceived what I call the 'spirit' of Faith. And it is well that we should try to understand what that spirit is.

When Moses, in the solitude and the gloom of Arabian deserts, came suddenly, as he drew near to Horeb, on the startling apparition of the flaming bush, he said, 'I will go and see this great sight.' And he loosed his shoes from his feet, and hid his face. That is a figure of the soul's behaviour in the presence of God's revelation. The spirit of Faith is before all things the spirit of lowliness of mind. It is because so many men do not know what lowliness of mind is that they have no practical notion of what it is to have Faith.

What is the meaning of God's revelation to man? It means that He has spoken in order to let man know things which he did not know, which he was always confusing, or which he could never have found out for himself; things so important that without the knowledge of them his last end would be frustrate; things therefore of vital moment about God Himself, the dispensation of the world's salvation through Jesus Christ, the means of remission of sins and of sanctification, and the true path to the bliss of the heavens. Revelation is the light of man, but it is also the voice of God. It means the most

wonderful condescension on the part of God. It means the opening of heaven's doors—the admission to the secret things of God's majesty. The revelation which is in the world is dimly figured by that Shekina—that glory which dwelt in the temple of Sion—before which the Hebrew priest bowed down and adored. Revelation cannot be approached except in an attitude of what may be called the lowliness of worship. We come to it, not to criticise it, not to improve it, but to learn and to act. We cannot afford to lose one jot or one tittle of the precious light. The temper of the believer is the temper of Moses with unshod feet prostrate before the mysterious Voice in the wilderness.

If we turn now to the New Testament, we shall find that this was the view taken of revelation by those who, we must admit, knew best how to describe it. Let us first take our Lord and Saviour Himself. Everyone must have observed how absolute, peremptory, and magisterial He is in His proclamation of His holy doctrine. He takes His seat and speaks as one having authority. He is called the Master and the Teacher. He does not propose His doctrine as a subject of discussion or investigation; He exacts it as an obedience. He does not want inquisitive doubters, who will toss His words from one to another; He demands a following of devout disciples. He does not discuss; He appeals sometimes to one or two obvious proofs of His mission and divinity; but He contents Himself for the most part with the word of rebuke, of reproach, of exhortation, or of command. He has not come to argue with the world, but to subdue the world. He points His

finger and He says, 'Come after Me!' 'Hear Me!' 'Take My yoke upon you!' 'Learn of Me!' He wants men who will obey. His favourite type is a 'little child.' He speaks of His teaching as the Kingdom of God—a significant name; a mere philosopher would have called it a system or a theory—and He declares that none can come to it or enter it except those who become 'little children.' It is the Kingdom of God, because to believe is, first of all and above all, to submit our minds to the claims of the God who made us. And none but 'little children' can enter, because to make this necessary submission of the heart there must be a single-mindedness, an openness to truth, an absence of prejudice, such as is most fitly typified in a young and innocent child. He reasoned, indeed, at times; it would be simply false to say that the work of reasoning is not most important, under God's ordinary providence, as a preliminary to Faith. But when He gave proofs they were proofs of His mission (as I have said) and of His divinity; for His doctrine He merely gave them His word, as He sat on the hill-side, or stood in the boat of Peter, or walked in the porches of the Temple. And the souls who believed in Him bowed down before Him as they did so. The glance of His eye, the tone of His voice, the gesture of His arm, the words that He spake and the works He did—these drew the multitudes after Him. Some will say this was unreasonable in Him and rash in the believers. But they had *sufficient* proof, putting prejudice and passion aside; and it always has been, and is, and always will be, that the crowd must not only have its mind enlightened to

see good reasons, but must have its heart impressed, before it can thoroughly take them. The Hebrew leader took the shoes from off his feet, and then he saw the vision. And so Jesus, in His teaching, laid so great a stress on 'poverty of spirit,' humility, and simplicity. He had been prophesied as a king, and as a king He came. Those who brought gifts to Him and bowed themselves down, to them He gave His light and His truth.

The Apostles of our Lord, His first heralds and His commissioned preachers, took the same view of what Faith is as their Lord and Master. Saint Stephen, standing before the Jewish councils, calls the Jews a 'stiff-necked people'³—that is, a race which would not bend to the yoke of belief. Saint Peter declares that the preachers of the Gospel preached what they were inspired to preach by the Holy Ghost.⁴ Saint James exhorts the twelve tribes to be 'swift to hear' the word of God, which is able to save their souls, and to receive it 'with meekness.'⁵ And no one can require to be told how Saint Paul demands from his hearers the assent of Faith as a duty and a virtue. It is most true that Saint Paul argues and discusses; but here is the very reason of the gravity of his testimony. He reasons; he never shirks discussion, or tries to shuffle out of a difficulty. But with all that he lets his hearers feel that with him Faith means something more than an answer, or a definition, or the conclusion of a syllogism. He lets them know that if they refused to hear him they were resisting and despising 'not man but God.'⁶ In

³ Acts vii. 51. ⁴ 1 Peter i. 12. ⁵ James i. 21. ⁶ Thess. iv. 8.

the very opening verses of the great argumentative epistle of justifying Faith—the Epistle to the Romans—he calls Faith ‘an obedience.’⁷ It is an idea that occurs over and over again in the epistles. Take as a sample that passage in 2 Corinthians: ‘The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but powerful through God to the destruction of fortifications, subverting of counsels, and every height that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every understanding to the obedience of Christ.’⁸ The preaching of the Gospel, in its effects on the minds of the hearers, is like the advance of an army on a fortified town or a camp strongly entrenched. It means overturning, throwing down, destroying. Heights are stormed, plans upset, devices brought to nothing. What fortified heights are these? What counsels and loftinesses of thought? None other than the human wisdom which comes to the Gospel to criticise before it will submit. The state of mind which Saint Paul expects to find in the true believer is ‘a captivity of the understanding,’ ‘an obedience.’ It is quite plain that Saint Paul would have had little sympathy with independence of thought and free inquiry. He would have said, as indeed he did say, to the philosopher as to the uninstructed, ‘You are a poor weak creature, standing in need of light to save your soul by; I have that light, for to me is committed the truth of God; bow your knee, bend your head, and hear what I say, and having heard, go and put it in practice.’ And it is easy to see that if Faith meant a ‘captivity’ of the mind and an ‘obedience’ of the heart to the

⁷ Romans i. 5.⁸ 2 Cor. x. 4, 5

Thessalonians and the Corinthians, it means the same thing to Englishmen in the nineteenth century. The early hearers of Saint Paul seem, in some instances, to have been difficult to persuade that the spirit of lowly-mindedness was the right spirit: just as an Englishman now. But Saint Paul insisted. He told them he knew that 'wisdom' and 'prudence' were great words in their mouths; but it was just this 'wisdom of the wise' which was to be destroyed, just this 'prudence of the prudent' which was to be rejected. 'Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' It was the 'foolishness of preaching' which was to save them that believe.⁹ In other words, for Faith there was required a bowing down or submission of the mind to what seemed at first sight folly. The great Apostle had passed through the fiery trial himself. It was the process of his own conversion that he was describing when he said that Faith meant the humbling of the heart. Before Saul believed in the Lord Jesus he was smitten to the ground and lay prostrate in the dust. When God's mercy overtook him that day on the road near to Damascus, it was not in the shape of a proof or a discussion. The power of God struck down his body, and at the same moment humbled his heart; and as he lay upon the ground he cried out from the depths of his newly-found humility, 'O Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?'¹⁰ He was converted, though he knew no creed or catechism yet. The Voice that pierced his heart did not go on to instruct him. Any instrument could do that now. Poor Ananias could tell him all he needed to know. The work was

⁹ 1 Cor. i. 19, 21.

¹⁰ Acts ix. 6.

done; for the proud doctor, the learned Pharisee, the busy and strenuous defender of his sect, was humble, obedient, and contrite of heart.

The New Testament teaching and practice, then, in regard to the great and fundamental virtue of Faith, appears to be briefly as follows: He who wishes to prepare himself for Faith must become as a 'little child.' Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. A child has no prejudices. It has no strong passions. It does not scheme and contrive for self. It is simple, open, and single-minded. Such must be the believer. You will say, If a child is all this, still it remains true that a child is more frequently deceived than a shrewd and grown-up man or woman. Yes; but the question is, not what is the best preparation for escaping falsehood, but what is the way to prepare for truth. God's revelation is a torch which He has lighted Himself. It was His business to see to that. It is ours to tear the bandages from our eyes, and lift them up from the earth to where the brightness gleams. A man need not be a shrewd reasoner, need not be a great philosopher, reader, thinker, or scholar, to be able to make out God's revelation. He need only be guileless, unprejudiced, earnest. You will say, Then how is it so many in this world miss God's light? Because they are sinful, prejudiced (though not always by their own fault), or indifferent. Because they come, not to submit, but criticise; to discuss and to pass sentence. This is the wrong spirit. It is a spirit that will, perhaps, save them from a mistake here and there; from an error more or less in some matter of detail. But when they have criticised and questioned and settled everything

(if they ever settle anything), they will be as far from the burning bush as ever. They will not have bowed the head. They will be like men who calmly stand and watch the rising flood when they should be swimming for their lives. They measure and observe, they note their lines and their angles; and all the time the waters they should boldly breast are rising dark and hungry round them, till it is too late to swim away and be saved.

In the second place, the New Testament teaches us that Faith is an obedience. Obedience is a word men do not like. Yet far the greater part of the world must obey outwardly; and if a man obey outwardly, and not with the inward spirit also, he is either a coward or a hypocrite. We must not only accept the Gospel, we must 'obey' it—as St. Paul says.¹¹ Other teachers state their doctrines and their theories, and persuade mankind to adopt them. No speaker, pleader, or philosopher ever dares to say 'Obey me,' save only he who speaks in God's name. Here, acceptance is not merely a reasonable thing—it is a duty; and resistance is rebellion and sin. A man who comes to revelation with the idea that he will please himself what he accepts and what he rejects has not mastered the very elementary notion of what is Faith. He must come prepared to bow to revelation the moment he sees it. And if you say that every reasonable man would wish to do this—if he could only see it—I answer, it is more uncommon than you suppose. There are many who never think of bowing their hearts to God, even to God as far as they know Him;

¹¹ Romans i. 5.

and how can they expect that He will enlighten them to know Him better? There are many who are strong in theoretical obedience, and who think they would obey if they could hear the voice of God. But they have never made themselves feel that perhaps He may, really and actually, let them hear Him. They think of Him as afar off. They are like the men who picture themselves treading burning sands and suffering heroic hardships in far-off Africa, but never let the cold air in upon themselves to test their endurance at home. They think they would obey God, but they never pray to Him. A virtue is no virtue until it is sublimated into an habitual prayer. And the obedience which many men think they would pay to God's voice is proved to be but a phantom or a fancy, because they are such utter strangers to lowly heartfelt worship altogether. When the poor beggar cried out, 'Oh Lord, that I may see!' Jesus opened his eyes. Many men's eyes are shut because they let Jesus pass by and never with longing heart cry to Him to help them.

And, thirdly, the Spirit of Faith must be one which looks for a 'captivity.' Free-thought and Faith are as opposite as light and darkness. The real consistent free-thinkers know this, and do not care to hide it. But there are multitudes of well-meaning people in the world who want to believe and yet be free to think as they please. This cannot be. God's revelation means a certain amount of definite information about the most weighty matters, and a certain number of rules called commandments. By one part of His revelation a check is laid on free speculation; by another, on license of

action. Faith is no mere vague feeling or pious sentiment. It is information. And all information limits the freedom of thought, and ought, if right were always done, frequently to limit the freedom of action. When the mind knows the rules of Arithmetic, it is unable to think anything which contradicts them. When we are told that a war has commenced on the continent, or a prince has spoken, or a parliament has come to a resolve, conjecture and speculation on those precise points come to an end. When a man wakes and finds himself on the side of a precipice, he thanks the welcome dawn that has let him know it. He must perforce walk the other way; his freedom is restricted; but he will not now be dashed to pieces. Thus revelation is restraint. It puts a yoke upon the wanderings of the human intellect. It checks the flight of the imagination, and saves mankind a thousand wild and pernicious errors on the gravest of all questions. But is this a 'yoke' or a 'captivity'? Is it not rather freedom and emancipation? Faith marks out certain boundaries, outside of which lie darkness and danger. But, on the other hand, it is a light which opens a new space to us. It beckons us to discoveries we never should have dreamt of. It gives us a new country. It is as if a princely leader placed himself at the head of peasants and oppressed workers, and led them out from their poverty and their wretched homes to a new Western land, with mighty streams and grand plains and lofty snow-clad hills, full of plenty and of beauty. For no one knows what Faith can tell him until he has placed its light yoke upon his neck. No one can know how much is contained in the creeds of the

Church and the Holy Scriptures, until he takes them with worshipful respect and reads them with believing love. The Christian revelation is as the light of the sun. If it did not exist, it would be necessary to create it. It is so full of light and guidance, of thought for great thinkers and for little thinkers, of food for great minds and for smaller minds, that although it says on many points 'Thus far and no farther,' yet it is freedom, growth, and health to the soul. For it is not restraint that stunts the soul; but it is license which ruins it. Large space, free air, and the rains of heaven will make the forest trees grow; and if the hand of the forester interfere with skill, they will grow all the better. But when they crowd together, and when every evil growth is allowed to choke them, then the more the rains fall and the sun shines the wilder, the poorer, the more useless, and the more mean will age and growth make every tree.

Having thus seen what sort of a spirit is the Spirit of Faith or Belief in God's revelation according to the New Testament, let us make one reflection in conclusion.

If an earnest man wanted to be a believer, in the sense of our Lord and Saint Paul, I know not whither he could turn except to the Catholic Church. He must take some authority. He cannot stop at his Bible—for his Bible is a book which does not explain itself. His Bible is a book which contains the revelation about God, the Trinity, the Incarnation, Sacraments, Sin, Justification, Sanctification; but there are a hundred contradictory opinions what the Bible means by them, and the Bible does not explain itself. And therefore an

earnest man, especially if he be a busy working man or woman, with little or no book-learning, is almost as badly off with his Bible alone as without his Bible at all. And he cannot go to any of the churches, sects, communions, or persuasions outside the Catholic Church, because they, one and all, will tell him they have no authority to explain the Bible. They will not claim power to teach. They will say, We will assist you, but you must find out for yourself. You must discuss, criticise, choose, reject, and so form your religious creed. And thus you must not come as a 'little child;' you will not have to 'obey;' and your opinions will be no 'captivity' to you, because you can revise them and even throw them aside at any moment. And when he hears this he will know that their idea of Faith is very different from that of our Lord and Saint Paul. His first object, therefore, will be to find a Church which *professes* to teach with authority. And it is this which the Catholic Church professes to do.

Catholicism professes to *teach*. Our Lord left a commission to the body of pastors to 'teach all nations' with magisterial power. To them was delivered a body of truth, comprised chiefly in the Scriptures. This body of truth they have to guard, to interpret, and to develop, as occasion may require. They, and their chief Pastor by himself, have the power to speak infallibly on matters of belief and morality. Their creeds, therefore, and their solemn rulings are as the Word of God, which he who wishes to be a believer must accept as a 'yoke.'

She also professes to teach mysteries—that is, difficult and obscure truths that we cannot make out more

than a very short way. And so she expects humility of mind and bowing down of the heart.

And the Catholic Church admits no doubting, no examining, in matters once fully decided. She could not do so, and still profess to be God's living witness. 'Grounded, settled, and immovable'¹²—these are the words of Saint Paul, which the Spirit of Truth inscribes upon her banner.

And lastly, the Catholic Church professes to be an enemy of what men call progress in religious matters. Christianity is not like earthly discoveries or sciences; a science which a fallible man, slightly in advance of his fellows, gains glory by inventing, and which other fallible men painfully bring to perfection. Progress in science means the reversing of old notions, the application of new discoveries. It is true there is a kind of progress in revelation—a progress like the advance of the seedling to the state of the perfect tree. But it is a progress along given lines, within given bounds, without contradiction to the past. This progress the Catholic Church admits and promotes. But to those who would explain away the Bible, alter the meaning of the Incarnation, or disprove the existence of God, she opposes an attitude that is unchangeable. And so the aspirant to Faith should not be astonished or repelled if he finds that he must submit his views to her views. To the Spirit of Faith, novelties are dangerous, private crotchets are distasteful; anything which does not grow on the old tree is rotten fruit. The grand central pivots or hinges of truth have been settled once for all by reve-

¹² Coloss. i. 28.

lation; the Catholic Church will not and cannot alter them. She holds her teaching up, unchangeable, before the world; and those alone who bow before her have the Spirit of Faith.

This is not intellectual slavery. In one sense every mind, as I have said, must be a slave to the truth. It is no real freedom to allow a man to make as many mistakes as he likes. But, besides, the mind of a man who submits to the Catholic Church, having got definite and consistent notions about the most important matters, can afford to think and speculate over a thousand matters that a consistent Protestant, who had to make out his Faith for himself, could never get to. Putting Faith on one side, how much more consistent, dignified, and thorough would newspapers and books be if they all started from settled and consistent religious belief! And how fertile would intellectual men find those creeds and dogmas which they are afraid of now! As it is, the enormous books which Catholic theologians have written about theology show how grand a field they find it. What would be the result now, with all our bookmaking and increased culture? And belief in the Catholic Church is not an uneasy constraint. It does not bind up a man like the swathing bands wrap a mummy. It rather clothes him as with a graceful and easy robe. Belief, being perfectly natural to us all, comes to be perfectly natural in religious matters. And the truth is that Protestants believe quite as truly as Catholics, though it is against their principles. They believe their clergymen, their newspapers, their favourite books, or their friends.

If men must believe—as they must and will—it would seem right there should be a body of men trained in religious matters—devout, earnest, and leaning on the past—to direct their belief. Otherwise, they will be at the mercy of every self-made minister, self-taught preacher, and illiterate spouter, who may choose to lead them captive. Such a body of men we believe there is in the pastors of the Catholic Church—with whom Christ has promised to remain, and to send His Spirit to remain, all days, even to the end of the world.

But this much is certain: that until men come to recognise that Faith means an obedience, a taking up of a yoke, a bowing of the head, a humbling of the heart, there will be no such thing as Faith. There are numbers at this moment who call themselves believers, who only believe through habit, and who hold themselves ready to discuss or criticise whenever they seem called upon to do so. And therefore there are numbers who seem to believe, yet the spirit of whose Faith is dead or languishing unto death. Let the inquirer procure for himself, by God's help, the Spirit of Faith, and his catechism will not give him much trouble to learn. And let the believer pray that his Faith may be quickened, that his heart may be ever ready to submit, and his mind to learn, and his soul will stand firm in the midst of the shock of controversy and the gainsayings of all enemies whatsoever.

III.

PREJUDICE AS AN OBSTACLE TO FAITH.

THE Spirit of Faith, as we have seen, is a spirit of lowliness—of childlike obedience and of ‘captivity.’ If the heart of man were always as Almighty God made it and constituted it in His first dealings with His creatures, man would have no difficulty in obeying and submitting to the word of revelation. There would be little or no error, because there would be the light, and the heart prepared to see the light. But, as a matter of fact, we know that if God’s revelation be in the world, there are, and always have been, a multitude of men who, with more or less obstinacy, do not see it, and do not accept it. I have hinted at the causes of this; but now it is necessary to look more closely into man’s heart, and try to discern what it is that constitutes blindness in matters of Faith. For the state of the soul which resists revelation, or any part of it, is called blindness, as being a state of ignorance and error; it is called rebellion, as being a resistance to lawful authority; it is called carnal, earthly, and diabolical wisdom, as being anti-supernatural; and sin, as being a state of enmity to God and spiritual death.

It is a difficulty with many persons to see how Faith can have anything to do with the will, and how Unbelief can be a wilful sin. If God’s revelation is plain to

be seen, they say, we can see it ; if it is not plain, we cannot see it, and that is an end of it.

I am not denying that Faith is, as a mental act, elicited, not by the will, but by the intelligence. Faith is a 'conviction,' an 'argument' (that is, the result of reasonable premisses). It is distinct from knowing or seeing ; but only because knowing or seeing means direct personal contact with something, whilst Faith means knowing on the word of another. Indeed, the act of Faith, considered as a mental act, consists of two acts : first, the knowing or seeing that God, who cannot deceive nor err, has spoken ; and this is an act of knowledge ; and secondly, the accepting the truths that He has thus manifested, which is Faith properly so-called. In regard to the first of these acts, reasoning must, of course, precede. It must be proved that God has spoken, and that the Catholic Church is His voice and organ. These proofs may be of various kinds. There are, for instance, the proofs based on the consideration of what man is and requires, of God's goodness and power to do as He pleases. There are, again, the direct proofs of a revelation having been given ; proofs of the existence and mission of Moses, of the occurrence of miracles, of our Lord's mission and character, and of the signs that He wrought. And, lastly, there are the proofs of the divine office and endowments of the Church which He has left in the world. All these proofs may be treated separately, and they are generally so treated ; but each head of proof derives strength from being taken in connection with the others.

But I have already impressed upon you that I am not so much directly proving anything in regard to

God's revelation as enabling you to prepare yourselves to see it, wherever it is. Having admitted that Faith is an act of the intelligence, in the sense in which I have explained, I come now to draw attention to the important fact that it is *an act of the will also*. It is not meant that it is an act of the will in the same sense as it is an act of the intelligence; but still it is an act of the will. For it is with the mind as with the bodily senses. The will can control the eye and the hand. The will can bid the eye be shut to what is present, or turned to what before was out of sight. And the will can blind our mental view and turn aside our intellectual look quite as easily and with far greater subtlety. It is a common saying that no one can be convinced against his will. Everyone knows that the views which a man takes up, not merely in trivial matters, but in things of the greatest importance, largely depend on a thousand things besides mere evidence. A man's bringing up, his habits of life, his friends, his pride, his passion—do not all these act upon his convictions and generally mould them after their own shape? There are some self-evident truths, no doubt, to which it is impossible to blind ourselves, however much we may try. But as soon as the number of these truths is exhausted, there begins the region where will and wilfulness can shut our eyes and turn us about. Deductions and consequences which follow from the plainest and most undoubted truths—even these can be evaded. And at every step from overwhelming evidence towards opinion, probability, and conjecture, the will and its prejudices are more and more absolute, and interfere more

and more effectively. The ignorant, the ill-educated, and the average-minded—in fact, the bulk of humanity—are exposed to the danger of allowing their reason to be blindfolded by the influence of their wants, inclinations, and passions. And even the most intellectual and the most cultivated are sure to have their convictions tinged with a large infusion of their likings.

Now, a man's impulses and likings may arise either from his human nature itself, or from external influences brought to bear upon him. He may want or refuse to do a thing merely because his innate passion prompts him, or because he has been wrought upon till he has acquired a second nature. It is of this second nature of man—or, in other words, of prejudice—as an obstacle to revelation that I wish to speak in this discourse; leaving the consideration of the deeper subject of man's own original nature for the next.

In the thirteenth chapter of the Acts is related the history of the preaching of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch in Pisidia. On the Sabbath-day, in the synagogue, after the reading of the Law and the Prophets, Paul, rising up and hushing the wondering congregation with a gesture of his hand, preached to them Jesus Christ. Many conversions were made, and the week passed. Then on the next Sabbath a very large audience—'the whole city almost'—flocked to the synagogue, and Paul preached again. 'And the Jews,' continues the inspired narrative, 'were filled with envy, and contradicted those things which were said by Paul, blaspheming.'¹ And thereupon Paul and Barnabas told them, in the plainest

¹ Acts xiii. 45.

and boldest way, that since they *rejected* the Word of God, it must be to the Gentiles they would speak for the future. We have here an example of prejudice. It is prejudice which is heightened by envy and evil passions; but there is no reason to suppose that the Jews did really admit in their hearts the truth which they rejected in their words of contradiction and blasphemy. How far they sinned, it is impossible to say. Prejudice against religious truth may be a deadly sin, or it may be an excusable ignorance. St. Peter seems to admit some excuse even for the crucifiers of our Saviour; they did it through ignorance, he says, as also their rulers.² And St. Paul's vehemence of antagonism and prejudice against his Lord and Saviour was, to some extent, mistaken zeal for God's honour. 'I, indeed,' he told Agrippa and Bernice, and the splendid audience which had assembled to hear him in the palace of Festus at Cæsarea—'I, indeed, did formerly *think that I ought to do* many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.'³ His eyes were blinded, until that flash from the heavens near the gate of Damascus, striking him with darkness of sense, made him see the light of the Spirit. Prejudice may be deadly sin, or it may be lamentable misfortune. Perhaps we may be allowed to say that, unless there is sin in the way, prejudice will disappear sooner or later. But, in addressing ourselves to the task of removing it, we should imitate the spirit of St. Peter, and refrain from judging the hearts of those we could convert.

The work of conversion is, on man's part, chiefly

² Acts iii. 17.

³ Acts xxvi. 9.

the work of removing prejudice. When the revelation of God first comes to a man's door, it must of necessity be met by a disposition to reject it. When the Jews had Christ crucified preached to them, all their tradition, expectation, and habit of thought rose up to reject the novelty. When the pagan Romans first heard from Peter the name of the One God and of His Son, it was as if an insane man had tried to turn aside by a word the waters of the Roman Tiber. The stream of settled thought, established custom, and proud history was, to all human appearance, too strong to let the new dogma live for a generation. And the Apostles encountered the strength of this torrent in every individual soul they came across. Even those nations which were barbarous when the truth came to them were prepossessed against the truth; like the trees on the bleak Eastern shores, the minds of the peoples were bent as the bitter winds of many a winter had bent them. And what is true of paganism is true of heresy. Born, nurtured, grown to man's estate in an atmosphere of error—clinging to error all the more firmly because it has mixed up with it some elements of the truth—the population of a country which has grown old in heresy is steeped to the very bone in prejudice. Just the same ignorance and repugnance of thought exists in our days in regard to such truths as the Real Presence in the Eucharist and the Infallibility of the Pope, as existed in the days of Tacitus against the unity of God and the Incarnation of God the Son.

In order to understand better what prejudice is, let us look at the sources whence it springs. Prejudice,

then, is a preoccupation or prepossession of mind and feeling against truth. It is a state or disposition which was not born with us or innate in us, but which has been brought about by external causes.

And the first cause or source of prejudice is education. By education I do not, of course, mean mere book-learning, mere reading, writing, and casting accounts; I mean all those influences which from birth to firm manhood go to mould and form the mind and heart. I may remark, in passing, that the facts described and summarised in the word 'education' make Protestantism, as a theory, impossible. The essence of Protestantism, as an Anglican Bishop said lately, is that 'each man forms conclusions for himself' in matters of religion. But, on the contrary, the fact is, and must be, that the mass of men simply accept the conclusions in which they are brought up. I say it must be so. To form conclusions for themselves, they would have to turn readers, scholars, thinkers, linguists, and philosophers. And the mass of men will never be anything of the kind. The educated man may, perhaps, reject a truth here and there, or adopt an opinion, or come to a conclusion which he fondly thinks he has made out for himself. But even if that be true, his general religious practice will remain the same—will remain what he was brought up in. This thought shows the power of early bringing up; and it leads me to say that if the Catholic religion, for instance, be the true religion, the prejudice against it which exists in men's minds in a country like this is quite sufficient to account for its being hated and avoided. Prejudice is a state of pre-

possession. To the prejudiced mind truth comes as our Lord came on the night of His birth, and knocks at the doors of houses in which there is no room ; they are occupied ; truth must stop outside. The ordinary Englishman has taken in, since the first dawn of his reason, thousands of impressions about the Catholic Church, which he has accepted, for the most part, without an attempt to verify them. His mother and his nurse have shaped his imagination as the potter shapes clay ; and the Catholic Church, to that child, is moulded by the phrases, the epithets, the casual words, or the studied depreciation of those who carried him in their arms and held his hand in the days of his infancy. The light which has shone upon him has come in through the windows of his father's house, and his sensitive fancy is coloured by its colour. What is begun at home is continued at school. As he grows up, all the chambers of his brain and the avenues of his thought are gradually filled with the 'idols' which he picks up as he walks in his gradually-enlarging world. His masters, his books, his schoolfellows, his clergymen, all contribute to the furnishing of the empty and receptive intelligence. The standards by which he measures and judges, the pictures which stir his love, his sorrow, or his hatred, the mottoes and master-thoughts which lead him and guide him, are gathered one by one ; and one by one, as years go on, they become more and more a part of the very fibre of his being. The fathers and mothers, the schoolmasters, the clergymen, the books and newspapers of England—it is these which make up English men and women. And

you well know—I need not try to express—what the majority of these ‘educators’ and fashioners of youthful minds think and say about the Catholic Church. I am not saying whether it is right or wrong. But if it is wrong, it is the root and the reason of the strongest prejudice that could be. The Catholic Church exists in the thought and imagination of millions in this country as an unscriptural, corrupt, intolerant, superstitious, and absurd system of religious imposture. They think it to be so, hold it to be so, not because they have looked and seen for themselves, but because such is the picture or figment which long-continued impression of external influences, like some corrosive acid which marks ineffaceable lines on the steel, has written upon their brain. The majority hold it, alas, to their death—unreasoning, contented, glorying in the opinions which they have done little more to acquire for themselves than they have done to merit the colour of their hair. There is a comparative minority who read, inquire, reason, and think out proofs with greater or less thoroughness. But education has given its bias to them and to their thought not a whit less decidedly than to the unthinking multitude. When they read, they read the books which take their own side. If they read an impartial book, they see one half of every sentence, and do not see the other. They are prepared to find one set of arguments good and irrefragable, and the other worthless and bad. In all their reading, writing, and reasoning, they start with the fixed assumption, that the Catholic Church is false and in the wrong. They do not even allow themselves to suppose, as a serious possi-

bility, that she may be right and true. They see their side of the shield; they do not dream that the other can be any other colour. They delude themselves with the notion that they are above prejudice, and that they look outside of their minds for real facts; but all the time the 'idols' of education, of social impression, of general atmosphere, are what they really see. Facts assume the colours of their fancy; arguments make no impression, except so far as they lie along the straight and narrow vista they are accustomed to see before them. The Pope, to the educated or controversial Protestant, is a figure stuffed out with rags and straw, made to be the reason of a bonfire. The tradition of three hundred years has shaped him; and from time to time the portentous shape is solemnly carried out, and every passage of Scripture which is capable of being used in that sophistical way which logicians call inference of the universal from the particular, or *vice versa*, and every doubtful compliment in the Fathers, and all the 'facts' which can be painfully raked from the gutters of history—most of them utterly irrelevant as arguments, even if true—all these stones and injuries are thrown in his scarecrow face; and then he is solemnly burned, while mobs applaud. The Infallibility of the Church is an imbecile fiction of the nursery, which the Protestant polemic, with contemptuous smiling, traces up the stream of fable till it disappears like some meteor of the swamp. He knows, before he starts, that it will disappear. The Real Presence—a most awful question of fact, if ever there was one—is an imposition, without a shadow of foundation or authority. The Protestant dis-

putant knows it to be so. Starting with this certainty, he takes up his Bible, and the literal becomes metaphorical, and metaphor changes into naked fact. He turns over the leaves of his Church history; and wherever the great fact comes up, he protests it is something else; and wherever it is absent, he cries out, 'Behold, it is denied!' Possibilities in material substance and in sensation which he would admit at once if some experimental physical philosopher propounded them in a letter to the newspapers, he scouts as incredible contradictions, because they are required by the Church's belief in the Blessed Sacrament. And so prejudice walks through the moral and the material world, like some misshapen fabled monster with fixed eye, which can see no colour but the colour it was born to see—which cannot look to the right or to the left, but only straight before it—for whom the field of existence and of possibility is limited to the narrow lines it moves along; whilst the infinite forests around are full of life and wonder—whilst the untravelled ocean sounds unheeded along the shore, and the spaces of the ether overhead are peopled with worlds unthought of.

The prejudice which springs from education and bringing up is the most absolute and invincible of all forms of prejudice, because it is a prejudice which is part of the mind's own growth. To remove it is not merely to remove a veil or pull down a wall of partition, but to burn out of the heart the marks which have grown into its fibre. If the prejudice against the Catholic Church which arises from education be a prejudice (as Catholics know it is), one thing is certain;

the Catholic doctrine has enormous difficulties to contend with. It is a difficult thing to alter the views and general tone of thought even in the plastic mind of a young boy or girl ; but when the mind, like the bones, has lost its pliability and grown hard ; when the thought, never very active, has settled down into stagnation ; when the hopes and illusions of youth have given way to the unemotional plodding, the routine mill-work which makes up the lives of ordinary Englishmen, then what lightning of eloquence or torrent of reasoning can efface the old false ideas ? What beam of sunlight can pierce into the darkness amid the cobwebs where the old 'idols' stand, and make room among them for the truth ? Even when the truth has made its way in, and the poor prejudiced mind begins to see it, the wrench, the novelty, the pain of letting go the old ideas, is a martyrdom which Catholic priests often have to witness and compassionate from their hearts. 'I am too old to change.' There is no cry so pathetic as this. It is the cry of the sailor who has sailed his long voyage with prosperous gales and carrying current, until his hand has grown feeble with age, his rudder stiff, his ropes rotted, and who just at sunset is horror-struck to see that he has missed his harbour, and is running straight upon the whitening surf. 'It is too late to change !' And yet he must turn or perish.

Every allowance must be made for prejudice of education. God only knows how far each soul is answerable for its own share ; but we know that the deepest damnation will be for those who first established that system of false teaching which has moulded the minds

of the generations in this country for the last 300 years. Individual sins, private unbelief and wickedness are bad enough; but the teacher, the king, the minister of state, who sets up error and leaves it as an inheritance for the unhappy generations to come, what shall he deserve? He counterfeits God's own work. When God sows the good grain of His word, he sows the cockle of false teaching. They must both grow up together; the Master will not separate them till the harvest; but the sower is His enemy.

I have dwelt upon the prejudice of education because other sources of prejudice are trivial in their effects compared with this. But it will be well to notice briefly one or two of them.

The second source of prejudice, then, is what we may call the world. The world means men and women—their aims, sayings, doings, and example, as far as they affect ourselves. When worldly advantages are on the side of an opinion, the mind is singularly open to see its truth. And, conversely, when to embrace a view would be to go against 'the world,' that view is difficult to take in. What I have called 'the world' raises prejudice against the Catholic Church by predisposing a man to keep out of the Church whatever his reason tells him. It acts in various ways. It may be, in the more respectable circles, that a man would be cut by his acquaintance if he became a Catholic. Instances of this happen every week. It is singular that good, worthy, and well-meaning people should have such a morbid horror of Catholicism. It is not unfrequently the case that a man's friends would think less of it if he became a Turk than if he

became a Catholic. And the feeling that he will have to undergo this is enough to prejudice any man. It is far worse when the embracing of Catholicism involves the breaking asunder of the ties of family. There are numbers who, irrespectively of truth or falsehood, are shocked and agonised at the hold which Catholicism is getting over them, or perhaps over some near relation, merely from the anticipation of the family troubles it will occasion—the reproaches of the father, the tears of the mother, the separation, the novelty, or the tacit reproach. ‘What would my family say if I became a Catholic!’ How many are held in bondage by this thought! They do not remember that they belong to God first—to God only. The men and women about them, even the nearest and dearest, have no claim upon them which can stand between themselves and their God. But the feeling is more than enough to create a prejudice. And the world has hundreds of ways of holding back the inquirer from the Catholic Church. It points out that the newspapers sneer at Catholicism; that the Pope is the object of unceasing ridicule; that Catholics, in this country, are mostly poor, and, in fact, Irish; that Catholics are priest-ridden, and must give up liberty and manliness of thought; and, most awful woe of all, that the ‘public opinion’ of the country condemns Catholicism. And there are thousands who are predisposed against the Catholic religion by such feelings as these. It is only too natural that it should be so. When a man has formed himself a place in the world, made himself a circle of friends, and is living more or less according to the tone of thought and

opinion which is the tone of the majority of his nation, his county, his town, or his village, it is very natural that he should be indisposed to change. New truth, if it be truth, is an unwelcome apparition when it draws the curtains of his couch and bids him get up and suffer uncertainty and discomfort for its sake.

A third source of prejudice is what we may call, in old-fashioned phrase, the flesh. It is a man's lower and baser self. It is the 'law of sin in the members,' that wars against the spirit. Ease, prosperity, sensuality, absence of trouble and anxiety—these are what a man's lower nature wants and seeks. Are there not many who could easily see the truth of Catholicism were it not that to become a Catholic they must suffer in their worldly prospects, and lose money and money's worth? People have a vague idea (even those who are otherwise ignorant) that the Catholic Church is a vigilant mistress. To become a Catholic it is not enough to appear before a class-meeting or a congregation and pour out a few unctuous phrases. There is confession; there is the searching examination and the painful avowal. Then there is the Eucharist, with the Real Presence, and the awful responsibilities which follow from the existence of such an awful fact. The Catholic Church exacts a real, vital, detailed religious life. Habits of cherished sin must be given up. Careful self-examination must 'sweep' the spirit. Definite dogma and practice must be willingly taken up and loved. All this predisposes the flesh to dislike Catholicism, and to keep out of it. When money, comfort, and sensuality combine as advocates in a cause, the opposite side has little chance.

They are all against the Catholic Church ; and may we not be sure that the prejudice they create is the reason why many young men are afraid to admit the possibility that Catholicism is right? It is not that men consciously avow to themselves that it is their baser propensities which hinder them from being Catholics. It is that their lower self raises a mist which prevents them from seeing what Catholicism is. It makes them impatient of hearing about it. It gives them a personal interest in not knowing it to be true. They are like men who hurry out of the house, or turn quickly back on the road, to escape an unwelcome messenger.

There is one other source of prejudice. If there are such beings as evil spirits, with power on earth, and if the Catholic religion is the true religion, it is certain that these spirits will not be passive in its regard. When John the Evangelist heard the voice in Patmos which told him what he was to say to the Seven Churches, He who bade him write spoke of the 'synagogue of Satan,' and the 'seat of Satan,' the place 'where Satan dwelleth.'⁴ It was the Evil Spirit himself with whom Jesus had to contend. It was the Evil Spirit who inspired false teachers, and who stirred up persecution. 'Behold the Devil will cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried.'⁵ And there is no doubt the Devil is as busy now as then. He has power over men who give themselves up to infidelity. He possesses them. He does not make them rave and foam like the possessed ones in olden times ; but he exercises a subtle influence on nerve, brain and mus-

⁴ Apoc. ii. 9, 13.

⁵ Ib. ii. 10.

cle, which makes them act, speak, and write against the Church of God with a sort of fevered and frenzied energy which they never show against any human institution. They hatch deliberate and gigantic lies. They wield the mighty powers of modern science for purposes of elaborate and systematic misrepresentation. They exercise a pressure on public thought as persistent as the pressure of the air round about men's bodies. They possess the ears of princes and powerful ministers. They move armies; and they make nations alter their laws to oppress the Church of God. Such instruments of Satan exist. And the prejudice which they create in the world—or, rather, which he creates by and through them—is the prejudice which at this moment hangs like a foul exhalation over the length and breadth of European opinion. The young, the unthinking, the multitudes who have no views except such as remain in their minds from the reading of their newspapers, are prejudiced against a system which is 'everywhere contradicted.'⁶

Let me repeat that I am not speaking of those who really think the Catholic Church is right, and yet, from some base motive, refuse to submit to it. I am speaking of those who *do not see* that the Catholic religion is true; who are prevented by their prejudices from looking at, or judging fairly, the arguments or the position of the Catholic Church.

An inquirer, then, might fairly ask, How am I to treat my prejudices; and, in the first place, how am I to know they *are* prejudices? Is it not simply begging

⁶ Acts xxviii. 23

the question to say that I am prejudiced, and the Catholic believer not prejudiced, but only steadfast?

This is an important question. And I answer it by observing, in the first place, that, on the Catholic theory, a true believer ought to have strong convictions (or prejudices, as opponents will call them). The Catholic believes in the Church as a living voice; a voice which instructs him in his infancy, impresses him in his childhood, confirms and strengthens him in his mature age. But a man who is not a Catholic has no theory of this kind. He recognises no teacher with a right to shape and educate his mind. From the use of reason in childhood to the loss of his faculties in old age, every voice which speaks to him of religion, and every influence which tries to impress religious views upon him, is a human fallible voice, which may be mistaken, and which, in many instances, *must* be mistaken, because contradictions cannot both be true. It is of no use to say he has the Bible. The Bible is what the Bible means; and, to the non-Catholic, what the Bible means is only what men make it out to mean. And therefore my first point is this, that all non-Catholics should be on the look-out, so to speak, for the existence of prejudice in their own minds. They may just as easily be prejudiced as not.

But I might admit that an honest unquestioning bias is no harm at all; and that the man who has such a bias will not be accountable before God. And I am even willing to admit that there are many of our countrymen who are at present in this state of what we call 'invincible ignorance.' But, on the other hand, how

many there are whose convictions—not to call them by the harsh name of prejudices—are tottering, shaking, or just in the smallest degree tainted with bad faith? There are numbers of non-Catholics who know perfectly well they have been utterly mistaken on one or two plain matters of fact in connection with Catholic doctrine. Perhaps they have found out that Catholics do not pay divine honours to the Blessed Virgin Mary; or that a priest cannot sell a man permission to commit sin; or, to descend to smaller prejudices, that the priests do not *always* speak to the people in Latin. To these I would say emphatically, You have been grossly mistaken in one point; look a little more carefully and you will discover that you have still a good deal more to unlearn. It is a duty to examine now. The pagans in the early centuries believed that the Christians ate the flesh of children, worshipped an ass, and committed gross immorality in their religious meetings. The true religion has always been misunderstood and slandered, like its Lord before it. And remember that in England especially, if the Catholic Church is the true Church, the only wonder is how a Protestant can even so far get over the prejudice of his bringing-up as to know her in any degree as she is. If, then, you have the least reason for doubting, inquire. If the house your fathers and teachers have built for you seems to be sinking a little, or letting in the rain by the roof, or the daylight by the solid walls, get outside of it and look about you. If the thing you took for a ghost, and were running away from, shows a substantial foot under its white sheet, go up to it, pull off the sheet and break the turnip-head

into pieces, and you will probably find that it is flesh and blood. If the preachers and teachers who have had the handling of you have committed themselves undoubtedly on this point or on that, challenge them thoroughly and see whether you have not been living in the dark.

And the wisdom of this way of acting is shown all the more strongly when you consider that you know almost nothing of the Catholic Church herself. You have kept away from her ministers, avoided her books, scouted her professing members ; and you know that, if the Catholic Church be not true, it is very certain she might be so and you not be at all aware of it. You cannot in fairness avoid making inquiry.

And there is a special reason why everyone is bound to notice and inquire into Catholicism. The reason is founded upon broad facts, undeniable and undenied. The argument is briefly this: that certain facts being admitted by all parties, the Catholic Church is the best working hypothesis for harmonising and making men act up to those facts. We may illustrate the argument by what must have happened many times in the world's history. When the unity, love, and justice of God, and the fact of creation, were first preached to a pagan people, I can suppose the preacher arguing thus : You admit there is a divine power ; now if you will attend to me for a short space, I can easily show that to believe that divine power to be One, to be Good, to be Just, and to be the Creator of all things, is far the best, not to say the only, view which a reasonable man can take. Or, again, suppose there were a nation who be-

lieved in the One God, but not in revelation ; then the missionary might say : You believe in a God of love and power, who made you ; and you see in yourselves the existence of moral evil and powerlessness to good, and the inevitable tendency of your nature to forget and corrupt the grand truth you profess. Now, I preach to you that God *has spoken* ; it is a reasonable and consistent theory at the very least ; it explains the how and the wherefore of many things, and the way out of many difficulties ; therefore you are bound to inquire into it. This is the least you can do.

Now I come to Catholicism. If there are any broad facts upon the face of the New Testament, there are three : first, the existence of some kind of teaching authority instituted by Christ ; secondly, some kind of a ministry ; and thirdly, some kind of Eucharistic presence of our Lord. I suppose every attempt at a church or a schism which has ever been made has embodied these three points, in some shape or other. I suppose there is not a believer in the New Testament who does not admit them in some sense. What I infer, then, is this :

It is certain that the Catholic Church has adopted and works most thoroughly each of these central thoughts. She holds that there is a living unerring voice of teaching which speaks to all ages ; she holds a ministry which does sacramental actions ; and she holds the Real Presence of her Saviour in the Eucharist. And therefore it is that I say she must be noticed and inquired into. You cannot dismiss her with contempt until you have patiently and painfully proved her to be

an imposition. And when you have proved her to be an imposition, you will be like the man who cuts down the solitary tree in the tropical desert and awaits the coming up of the next day's sun.

What I have said hitherto applies to all non-Catholics, and is grounded simply upon the fact of their having been brought up so. But there are particular reasons why very many should be on the watch for prejudice. There are some who doubt, and whose doubts trouble them, rising like importunate spectres which will not rest; and they dread to listen to their doubts, because they are afraid of what would happen if they did. They are afraid of coming to know the truth. They are afraid that a system which they have so many personal grounds for disliking will turn out to be the revelation of God. They are those who have, perhaps, committed themselves to a loud and public denial of the Catholic Church. They are those at whose recantation the world will stand and wonder. To turn would be, in their case, to be laughed at, to be avoided, to estrange dear friends, to abandon pleasant positions. To become a Catholic would, perhaps, be to lose their daily bread. And therefore they *must* be unconvinced. They think, speak, and act against the Church with a bitterness which is hard to bear sometimes, but which we can excuse, because we know that it comes from a troubled breast. 'Their madness is according to the likeness of a serpent; like the deaf asp that stoppeth her ears: which will not hear the voice of the charmers.'⁷ They are acting against light; they

⁷ Ps. lvii. 5, 6.

are despising, not man, but the Voice of the Holy Ghost.

A man who would act in good faith and be honest with his God in the momentous question of revelation must be sure that he is doing all that lies in him. He must abandon all narrow and insular notions of religion. The Church of God is over all the world, and before all nationality. It is a kingdom not of this world, but with a right to reign all the world over. He must keep down or put away that personal feeling of dislike to certain nations, classes, or individuals which tends to make him dislike Catholicism itself. The feeling that Catholicism is the religion of the poor and despised classes of the community, and of the weak, the ignoble, and unconsidered nations of the world, though it rests on a very one-sided induction, is a powerful prepossession against the Catholic Church. It has always been the same. You see it in Saint Paul. You see it in the book that the Neo-Platonist Celsus wrote in the second century to keep cultivated Greeks and Romans from turning Christians. Moreover, the man who would be sure that he is without prejudice must see that he is not leading a worldly and sensual life. Personal sin darkens the heart. Habits of sin stifle the impulses of grace. If a man cannot assure himself, in all humility, that he is in earnest about loving God above all things, he cannot be safe from prejudice against God's light. If he is given to sensuality, or if he is conscious of a keen and clinging enjoyment of an easy and pleasant life, he is very open to prejudice. If he grounds his objections to Catholicism on liberty, on independence of

thought, on the right to be one's own master, then he is almost certain to be wrapped up in prejudice; for, as the world understands these things, they are just what the teaching of Gospel truth has been given to destroy. And, finally, the heart that would be without prejudice must pray. No soul that prays as Jesus would have us pray can be lost. But argument and learning, natural honesty and kindness, all the natural virtues of the friend and the citizen, though they are very good, will not avail to bring a man to the light unless he prays. Yes; after all, God's grace being understood, a man has his heart in his own hands. The heavy fogs and mists which, in the intervals of wintry gales and rains, roll over these Northern seas from which our islands rise, are full of danger; and at their coming on seamen must be passive and wait till the laws of nature are fulfilled and the skies are clear again. And the thick mist of prejudice is a fearful danger to the soul of man. Disaster, wreck, and ruin, worse than any the senses can take note of, are in the path of the man who walks in guilty prejudice. But he can disperse the darkness and be free. He can raise his heart to God. He can rise above the earth and its exhalations. He can be sincere; he can resolve that he will do God's will, whatever it may be; and he can pray without ceasing. And the sun will shine out when the Lord so wills.

IV.

WILFULNESS AS AN OBSTACLE TO FAITH.

But now you rejoice in your arrogancies. All such rejoicing is wicked. ST. JAMES iv. 16.

PREJUDICE comes to a man from without. It is the effect of early training, of lifelong teaching, of reading, and of living in the world. It is the result of almost imperceptible impressions, and yet its force, as an obstacle, is such as in many cases to defy human efforts to remove it. It is like the snow which begins to fall, as the darkness sets in, on roof and road, in little flakes that come down silently all the night; and in the morning the branches bend, and the doors are blocked, and the traffic on road and rail is brought to a standstill. We have considered prejudice. To-day we must go farther—deeper down into the heart. The difficulty which man finds in Faith is not sufficiently explained by any explanation which deals merely with external causes. It is the heart itself, in its very constitution, as man now is born, which is the root of all that holding back, that haughtiness or pride, which prevents the greater part of those who do not believe from believing.

Whatever goodness there is in the human heart—and on that head it is not necessary to speak just now—

it is certain, in the first place, that there is also a formidable amount of evil; and, in the second, that the evil is stronger, naturally, than the good. History, that is fact, proves both these points. We can judge of man's heart from the results of men's lives; and the voice of cultivated antiquity joins with that of modern Christianity, and even with the instincts of heathenism and savage barbarism, in proclaiming that men's lives have always been, and are, in a very great measure evil. It has always been that evil is easier, more natural, more spontaneous, and that good has had to be fought for with sacrifice and abnegation; and evil has mostly prevailed. And whence does this evil spring? Was the heart made and constituted with corrupt and depraved inclinations by its Creator?

The Catholic tradition and teaching is, that man was originally constituted in rectitude and supernatural grace. The knowledge, love, and service of God was his object in this world; the happiness of the blissful vision was his destined end in the world to come. And man's heart was 'right;' that is to say, intelligence, will, and sensibility were in harmony one with another, and wrought together to the attainment of the grand and ineffable last end. But in his happy and sublime estate man's heart was still in his own hand. His will was still free to choose. He was free to turn from his Creator, and turn his back upon his grand destiny. He could not be otherwise, consistently with God's designs and his own nature. And consider what this freedom of man's heart means. It means that man's heart has the marvellous power of seeing good in anything which

exists, and of fixing itself upon that element or vein of good, to the exclusion of other things that are really better, and to the exclusion also of the Creator and His blissful vision. It is true that these last are only other names for pure, unmixed, and necessary good; but still, as long as the heart of man was to live in the world, even the world of Paradise, it was not fully to appreciate this; and therefore, though it knew more than enough, and was drawn by a thousand chains to choose and cling to what it knew so clearly, it had the power of shutting its eyes and breaking every bond asunder. There was something very near it—something lying close to itself, nearer than the knowledge which it had of the supreme objective good. The consciousness of a rational creature necessarily begets that *self* which lies at the bottom of all the movement of the human heart. Self must be the motive-spring of choice. Self may choose to annihilate self on earth; and in the bliss of eternity self will be crowned, completed, and ravished into ecstatic trance by the ineffable Vision which it *must* possess, or be in misery for ever. But self cannot die; and until it is bound and fettered in the sweet entrancement of bliss, self may reject anything, or take up anything, in this world of passing shows, and with no other motive, on final analysis, than itself. This was the power which lay, not dead, but living; not even asleep, but slumbering, in the peace of Paradise, at the bottom of Adam's heart, as he walked in the primitive Eden, even in the presence of Jehova. The moment came when it woke up, and wrought the mischief that was in it to work. Adam's sin was dis-

obedience, or pride. It was the assertion of that self which he had in him. He turned his back upon his Creator, and preferred a created good, mean and miserable though it was; but it was really self that he set up in God's place when he said, 'I will not obey.' And the innate self or wilfulness of man never seemed to slumber again after Adam's disobedience. Or rather, it did learn to slumber, but not among the bowers of Eden. In Paradise the whole heart was sound, the whole intellect clear; and true good had come so naturally to be loved and longed for that the heart was peaceful in the very strength of its propension. But after the fall, with the first parents and with us their offspring, good has become arduous, because true good is now more hard to see clearly, and because in the same proportion as true good recedes from view the perverse inward feeling which makes self all in all grows stronger; and also because a hundred importunate sensualities clamour at the heart's portals, and implore it to riot in their company. Therefore good has become arduous; in other words, self is prone to evil, that is, to rest in itself. And when it slumbers now, it is not, as I have said, in the hallowed repose of peace, in righteous strength, but rather in the degradation of a drunken debauch, when it has sunk so low as not even to struggle against its pride and its passion.

No one can doubt that pride and passion are strong motive powers in the actions which spring from man's heart. That there is a higher element in the human heart is true; what it is we shall see hereafter. But none can dispute that St. Paul is right when he speaks

so much of the lower nature which a man feels working within him; of the 'law of sin,' the 'law of concupiscence,' the 'old man,' the 'carnal man.' Man's will is still free; but it is more or less blinded, it suffers importunity, and it is more easily thrown on itself as an end and object. Passion or sensuality is the sensibility and activity of the lower nature without the sanction of the rational will. Passion is the stirring of sensual love or hate, of liking or disliking, of want or repugnance, in the sensitive powers. As man comes into the world now, reason cannot utterly silence and quell passion. Reason can control, direct, weaken. Reason can act as a constitutional monarch acts—with ingenious policy and management endeavouring to stop the mouths of those who complain and calm the violence of those who rebel. But reason has no despotic power. Given the object, passion lights up, smokes, and flames. And the heat and the smoke of passion act upon the higher and nobler powers to stifle them. Calm thought cannot subsist with passion. The pure and serene regions of spiritual contemplation are inaccessible to the heart that is filled with passion. Sensuality is a hindrance to the realisation of that life which is above us and around us. Spiritual matters are, at the best, difficult of discernment. The sense, which primarily supplies us with materials for thought, too often prevents us from thinking them out. And when the sense is indulged and given in to, spiritual discernment dies. The heart is chained to the earth; the idea of a future life or of an immortal soul is so dim and so far off, that it has no effect on thought or conduct; things beautiful, true, and of good report are

loathed; prayer is all but impossible. This is what is meant by a state of blindness, or hardness of heart. Hardness of heart results from giving the rein to passion. It is true that passion is born with a man; but it is born weak and puny. It may be stifled, subdued, almost killed dead. If it is allowed to grow great, it becomes a tyrant, and gets hold of every avenue and spring of the heart. The drunkard with his drink, the sensualist with his eating and drinking, the sluggard with his sloth, the impure with his degrading sin: all these, when they sin, do not merely cast one more stone upon the heap that God is one day to count, but they tie one more weight about their own hearts that will one day sink them in the sea.

Belief in God's revelation has had a great obstacle in human passion. I have already slightly touched upon this. But is it not self-evident? God's revelation speaks of an all-holy God, a strict moral law, and a future retribution. Passion feels the present and lives in the sensible. And therefore it acts on the reason like one who holds the door fast and keeps the innocent prisoner from the air and the sunshine. Or it is like some rabble rout who kill the very messengers who are bringing hope and food to the starving town. Passion is self; but it is of self that Truth hath said, 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.'

And the other side of self is pride or wilfulness. Pride is not one sin. It is the mother of sins. It is the accursed soil which grows a wilderness of sin. It is the fire in the earth's bowels which bursts out in various portents, but is always fire. At one time it shakes the

solid earth with tremblings and earthquakes ; at another it pours itself out in blazing lava-streams upon the farms and vineyards. Again, it thunders far over sea and land, and again it sends up to heaven the black smoke of its burning, now in a thin column, now in mighty masses which blot out all the sky. So it is with pride—which is another name for self. It looks at itself and it is pride. It looks round about, and it is vanity, conceit, ostentation. It looks at its neighbours, and it is hypocrisy, or envy, or malice, or uncharitableness. It looks to its God, its Maker, and then it is indifference, or presumption, or blasphemy, or disobedience, or unbelief.

Unbelief ! Yes ; pride, or wilfulness, as I prefer to call it, is at the bottom of an enormous amount of the unbelief which exists in the world. Whatever may be said of passion—and passion is a terrible obstacle to the acceptance of revelation—it does not spread such a thick night over the spiritual discernment as wilfulness. For Faith is a yoke, an obedience, a captivity. And wilfulness is a simple and complete natural aversion from the bearing of any yoke, from the yielding of any obedience. Wilfulness is that in our nature which rises up against the being ordered or dictated to. Wilfulness refuses a master and a law ; it would be its own master and a law to itself. A man tryannised over by his passion is often a believer in his heart ; and if passion dies out, or the terrors of death and judgment suggest themselves, he frequently shows that he believes, and uses his belief (with God's grace) to rise again to love and justification. But wilfulness is deeper in the fibre of the

heart than passion. It is so far natural to man that it is born with him and grows with him; and though reason (with God's help) may keep it within bounds, it is never rooted out. A child is wilful, and its delicate nerves and tender muscles oftentimes throb and quiver with the current of *will* which runs through them and comes out in temper, passion, spite, and disobedience. A young man's first impulse when he sets his foot in the real world is to do as he likes; and he too often takes care to do so, as far as is consistent with his worldly prospects. The luxury of being one's own master is above all other luxuries—even above money and the comforts which money can bring. Wilfulness throws the mind into attitudes of criticism, contempt of established fashions, discussion of all that can be discussed. And if any mind is not clever enough for discussion, it has no difficulty in simple sturdy opposition. It is when the body is strongest and the spirit highest that wilfulness engages in deadly struggle with the maturing soul, and perhaps conquers; and where it conquers we have a man who is led by mere nature, and knows not God, or virtue, or the bliss to come. Human wilfulness is essential opposition to God, who points out to man the only way, and bids him walk therein. It repeats every day the cry of him who first said, 'I will not serve.' Its spirit is the spirit of the evil one, who would rather reign in hell than serve in heaven; he is beaten, he is without justification, yet for ever he mutters thus, and strains the chain that holds him. This natural and carnal wilfulness is the greatest obstacle to the acceptance of God's revelation, to Faith. Whether there be ques-

tion of outwardly professing Catholics who are cold in the Faith, or of the multitudes who give themselves some of the numberless names of heterodoxy, or of the millions who sit in the death-shadow of heathenism, the preaching of the Faith is to them as though their nature encountered a blow or a shock, and was hurt. It is a stumbling-block. It is foolishness. They have words to express what they feel. They talk of liberty, independence, free-thought; of slavery, of the yoke, of the fetter and the tyrant. And they are right. For belief is a submission, a yoke, an obedience, a slavery. It is a submission to the Creator. It is the yoke of Jesus Christ. It is the obedience of reason to revelation. It is the serving of God, and of the truth. It is true that this is a royal slavery, a light and proud yoke to bear. But the fact remains that it is a yoke. Let the heart turn itself as it will, God's revelation, wherever it exists in the world, must come to it as a law and a fetter. It is as if some wounded animal, terrified and struggling fiercely, were held by a merciful hand to be healed and saved.

And there is no doubt that the calmly-reasoning man will look upon this wilfulness of the human heart as a wound and a weakness—not as health or strength. A force can only be judged by what it does. If it does what it is intended to do, its action is right and good; if it misses its proper aim, it only adds to the confusion of the universe. The human spirit is a force: a power more mighty in its movement than the great planets, which, noiseless and unresisted, move through the spaces of the ether. Let the swiftly-whirling star keep

to its true path—to its everlastingly-appointed sphere—and the fixed unchanging universal laws of things work harmoniously to hold it up and help it on. Collision, crash, and wreck lie outside its path. Let it swerve, and there is ruin. But let it be true to itself, and there is strength, swift progress, and perfection. The heart is made for a purpose, and its laws are broadly written on its very constitution. It must worship and love its Maker; and the proof of this *must* is that it must, in the long-run, possess its Maker, or be in anguish evermore. Therefore pride or wilfulness is in itself as great a deordination as would be the mad career of some enfranchised planet. It is as great a danger as if some terrific material power, like water or fire, should burst its containing bounds. But it is more than this with a rational soul: it is a misery. It is a misery, because the misguided force is really under the control of the rational will, with God's grace, in the long-run. It is a wound, because it is as if the soul, which ought to fly upwards, and which has power within it to do so, had been stabbed, or crippled with a shot. And it is final ruin, because the crash must and will come some day.

There are some who think, and even say, that to resist is manliness. Pride or wilfulness is not manliness. No doubt it is natural to man, and part of his fibre. But if any one is prepared to call everything he finds within his breast by the approving name of manliness, his manliness is not the manliness which is worth considering. Man has a controlling power within him, which is reason; and reason, though dragged along by wilfulness, can still direct and insist. And as reason

is that by which a man is a man and not a brute beast reason is the only root of true manliness, and not the inordinate self-assertion of wilfulness. Wilfulness is merely the pirate who seizes the laden ship and in drunken helplessness runs her on the rocks. Man is meant for God, and is never manly when he sacrifices himself to self.

And some put forward the great word, Freedom. They say it is a man's prerogative to be free. It is almost a social heresy in this country to say anything in disparagement of Liberty. Generations have clamoured for Liberty, fought for her, written about her, sung about her, until we of the present day are like men who are in the front of an excited mob, and are forced to go forward with the crowd and shout with them, on penalty of being knocked down and trampled upon. Yet, after all, no reasonable man would say that freedom is a good thing, merely because it is freedom. The power to do as you choose is a power; and so is speech; so is a sword. As speech may be used to very bad purpose, and as a sword may serve the ends of a murderer, so freedom may be as easily used for wrong objects as for good ones. Freedom *to do right* is indeed a great and precious boon. External coercion and internal persuasion, when employed for evil purposes, are great evils and wrongs. And freedom from the fetters which bind the hands from doing good, or the heart from seeing right—this is truly a good thing, to be longed for and even fought for. But the mere liberty to do as you like is not a good thing, but often an evil thing. License is not liberty. Now

it is just license which the human heart, left to the promptings of mere nature, wants and works for. So that these two watchwords, manliness and liberty, so often in the mouths of men, are misleading and dangerous. Mere 'manliness,' in the popular sense, is no more a virtue than a muscular strength is a virtue. A man is not good merely because he is strong or tall. He is not commendable merely because he has a strong propensity to please himself. Virtue—real, true, moral excellence—is a thing of the reason, of deliberate choice, of struggle. And therefore the mere lust of independence is not a virtue. To be manly in the true sense of the word you must not be an impulsive child or an ignorant and wrong-headed savage, but a Christian man, guiding your troublesome nature by the help of reason, faith, and God's grace. For the higher and the nobler part of man can only be developed and grow in the light and the sunshine of revelation and of sacramental grace, and can only be thoroughly free to follow its preordained course when there is a pressure on that pride or wilfulness which would bind it to the chariot-wheels of self.

The weakness of the human heart, then, and its wounded state—in other words, its passion, but especially its pride or wilfulness—are such that God's revelation is disagreeable to it. We may, therefore, expect that if God's revelation does exist in the world, it will encounter the opposition of human nature. And it is quite certain that, in the case of the Catholic Church, this opposition is a potent and undoubted fact. We have always had resistance and reproach ; and they

have come just from the quarters from which the history of Adam's disobedience would prepare us to expect them. First of all, in all ages and in all countries, the bulk of mankind have been, at the least, very indifferent to the voice of God's teaching and the precepts of His law. It was so in the days when the Catholic Church was the public Church of every state in Europe ; it is so now in Catholic countries, as well as in the minority of the population which is Catholic in a country like this. There is always a tendency to shut the eyes to eternal truth, and to resent the yoke of teaching. But opposition with Catholics is mostly of a silent and practical kind ; it seldom takes the form of explicit rebellion ; and, by God's help, the hearts of multitudes repent and they are saved. It is otherwise with non-believers. They, of course, make no scruple of saying out what they think ; and we find that the hardest sayings come from those who may be presumed to be most smitten with the taint of the fall, and possessed by passion and pride. I do not allude merely to the fact that wherever the Catholic Church has been forcibly overthrown the blow has been given, as a rule, by a prince or potentate who was personally an evil liver, and generally for motives connected with his evil life. I do not care to dwell on the fact that no view of the Catholic Church can be so forbidding as that which is suggested to a man by his darling sins and evil habits. But the startling fact is that the people who possess a great deal of the mental motive power of the world—statesmen, politicians, and public journalists—have, as a general rule, hated us. Now we know that the general run of states-

men, for instance, are men who pursue objects which are not at all supernatural or elevated in the Gospel sense, but earthly, temporary, and material. They work hard to qualify themselves to lead their nation in its home and foreign policy, in its concerns of trade, in its finance, in its matters of police. They have rivals to distance, powerful interests to conciliate, factions to reconcile. They have to practise simulation, affectation, hypocrisy, if nothing worse; and their object is the material prosperity of the State, if not chiefly their own ambition. To such the Gospel law is simply an impertinence. It would not work. It would interfere. Therefore they must have none of it. They must keep it out when it is not in, and banish and proscribe it when it is. This is the reason why so many statesmen have persecuted the Catholic Church. The Church professes to teach independently of them, by a sovereign right conferred by God. The rulers of states have different ends, different views, other codes of right and wrong; therefore they oppose the Church. And so far, at least, the Church bears no small resemblance to that teaching of Christ which St. Paul has called a captivity and an obedience. These men of the world do not care to persecute a Church which does not pretend to teach. And what is said of statesmen may be said of politicians generally and of journalists. Men who aspire to teach the world must either teach God's truth or their own private seemings. And men who teach out of their own hearts, or out of an evil tradition of merely human ideas, the more they formulate and express their thoughts, the more they drift from truth. Their ruling idea is that they

can teach what should be taught. And therefore, in their wilfulness, they must needs scorn the Church of God. We should expect it. The multitudes do not think much ; but the public writer must move on. He must form opinions and take sides. And in the enormous majority of cases the human heart, the taint of Adam, which he carries in him, will set him on the wrong side. And therefore the Catholic Church expects his opposition, and she has it. The statesman studies material and temporary interests, the journalist upholds free thought and free discussion ; and the Gospel of Christ comes in the way of both.

And I go farther. I venture to assert, not only that it is perfectly natural to expect that politicians and journalists will oppose the Catholic Church, if she be the true Church, but it is also to be expected that in a non-believing country, the greater the (so-called) civilisation, the keener will the opposition be. Civilisation means, with most men, material progress and independent thought, creature comforts, physical science, and indifference about religion. Civilisation, without Faith, means simply greater enlightenment in getting the greatest amount of gratification before death comes to hinder us. It means greater consciousness, more proud knowledge of things comparatively little to the purpose. It means an elaborate indifference to the Kingdom of Heaven. It means a more systematic cultivation of passion and wilfulness. And therefore it means opposition to the revelation of Christ, which points to heaven, and exacts humble submission. And that is the reason why modern civilisation hates the Catholic Church. A

civilisation which includes true Faith strengthens Faith and preserves it ; but it is a positive barrier to it when it is outside. It is a dragon which might guard a golden fruit ; but if the garden be already plundered, its chief office is to keep away the anxious voyagers who come with seed to sow the desolate soil afresh.

I conclude that it is human passion, but especially human wilfulness, which makes some of the best-endowed minds of our day, and a great part of its civilisation, resist the Catholic Church. Perhaps they know not what they do. But it is their misery, if not their fault. I might say that the most of those who clamour about free thought and independence have little claim to it. I have shown that not one man in a thousand really forms his religion for himself. In Protestantism there is plenty of despotism ; not such as the Church exercises, with calm maturity, leaning on the wisdom of ages, but irresponsible, unreasonable, and almost savage. Friends avoid friends ; parents disinherit children ; men of what is called good position dare not attend a Catholic sermon, for fear of the social consequences. But this is a poor retort. I prefer to invite you to consider, once more, the Gospel characters of Faith and the characteristics of the human heart, and to pray that weakness and wilfulness may have nothing to do with keeping the light from your eyes. Consider that Faith demands a sacrifice. Christ offers us peace—not the peace of sloth and indulgence, but the peace of calm and settled belief. Consider the Church as some guide or monitor, stern of aspect, perhaps, and uncompromising, who stands beside you on your journey whilst you deliberate

which way you shall turn, and briefly points out the true and only path that leads you home. You perhaps, if you are not in reasonable mood, fly into a passion with your truthful adviser, and, merely to show that you are free and independent, choose the way which leads to death. You think you prove your manliness when you allow your lower nature to play the tyrant over that reason which alone constitutes the true nobility of man !

I dwell upon the spirit of wilfulness, and its manifestations in the craving for independence and freedom, and the pretence of manliness, because I believe it is the very root of the world's opposition to the Spirit of Faith. It is the spirit which is spoiling the world just now, as it has spoiled many a region of the world before. Through it men are led into the worst of heresies and the worst of idolatries—the honour and the worship of themselves and their own thoughts. Through it there is coming to be no such thing as God or Jesus Christ, because mankind, instead of looking outside of themselves to be taught, look into their own uninstructed hearts, and set up for worship what they find there ; and what they find is sometimes as unlike the living God as any idol of India or the Southern seas. It is the spirit of wilfulness refusing to be taught, which is confusing the limits of right and wrong—which is making men deny virtues to be virtues and sins to be sins, because they are too independent to learn from others, or to follow any authority of times past or times present. It is wilfulness which is the reason of the most melancholy sight the modern world has to show—the huge and hideous waste of the good qualities of able and earnest men, who go

wrong in all directions because they think it manly to believe as they choose. They are conscious they have neither time nor opportunities to search out what is right for themselves ; they know they can only expect to make out a few of the easier problems of humanity ; yet they think it better to be content with shallow pools of water in the wilderness than to seek the stream. There is enough good-heartedness and earnestness round about us to move the world, if God so willed ; but it is wasted, because each man is for himself. The crowds follow, indeed, authority, but not because it is authority. They accept what is current because it is current and familiar, and because they have no power to think anything out for themselves ; but they have no true reverence, submission, or lowliness of mind. Their spirit is not the Spirit of Faith, but the spirit of inert and passive acquiescence. When the landslip comes, they slide helplessly. And the higher minds, as I have said, are only isolated guessers at truth. They sail, each in his little boat, tossed hither and thither, touching at every port, wrecked on every shore. And the world of religious thought, in a country like this, is like the low flats where a great river has burst its banks, and the shallow waters lie far and wide, noisome, inefficient, a ripple here or an eddy there, but without advance or motion towards the sea. If men would, these waters might return into the river's bed, and the banks might be made high and strong, and the stream might flow calmly on, full and resistless, carrying joy and usefulness to men, and finding its home at last in the boundless ocean.

V.

FAITH THE GIFT OF JESUS CHRIST.

(Preached on Christmas-day.)

Lord, Thou wilt give us peace ; for Thou hast wrought all our
works for us. ISAIAH xxvi. 12.

THE Lord and Prince who was given to the world on the night of Christmas we love to call the Prince of Peace. It was the title by which he was hailed in the Psalms and the Prophecies. It is the name which best suits the proclamation which angelic heralds sang forth to the world when they filled the midnight with their melody: 'Glory to God' and 'Peace to man!' His office was to be, to spread his peaceful empire over all the world; to give to men a true, firm, and lasting peace. And to symbolise this His purpose He willed to come down to the earth in the midst of the most profound peace. War had ceased in the world. The clash of arms had died down and died away. The Roman power peacefully grasped the conquered world. From the shores of Britain to Tartary and to India the legions were peacefully encamped, watching from their lofty entrenched hills or from their walled cities the populations that no longer thought of resisting them. Judæa and the Holy Land were at peace. In the phrase of the old historian, 'the land rested.' Fighting

had ceased. Roman soldiers garrisoned Sion ; Roman tax-gatherers sat at the receipt of customs ; Roman judges administered the laws. And He was born in quiet peaceful Bethlehem—Bethlehem, among whose cottages, hidden in their vineyards, cornfields, and olive-gardens, even the stir caused by the enrolment was nothing more than a village festival. The world at peace—the land at peace—the city at peace—the cave in the hill-side most peaceful of all : thus were things disposed when the way-farers of Christmas eve sought for a lodging. And in the words of Holy Scripture, ‘When all things kept silence, when the night was in its middle course, Thy Almighty word, O Lord, came down from the throne of his royalty.’¹

Thus we love to dwell upon the lessons of peace that Christmas brings. And yet is it not a strange peace that Christ the Lord has brought upon the earth ? Does not His own life, do not His own words, seem to contradict the angels and the prophets : ‘I came not to bring peace, but the sword’ ? These are His words. And did He not come, as Isaias prophesied, to pull down, to build up, to root out, to destroy ? Was he not, infant as He was, still the mighty God ?

We cannot understand His peace unless we can understand His power. There is a peace which is death, or solitude, and there is a peace which means the quiet and noiseless working of mighty force ; and the peace Christ came to bring was of the latter sort. He came into the world a power ; a principle of life. He came to

¹ Wisdom xviii. 14.

give men power to lead a very active and a very energetic life. He came with His hands full of the most powerful gifts. His object in coming was not to hush things into the silence of the tomb, but to set up a life and a power which, great as it was, should act silently and swiftly, as long as it acted under His own hand. But if it lost His own motion and direction, it was to recoil with hideous ruin.

Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. These are the two stupendous forces that lie within the small compass of that infant form.

Christ, our Lord and Saviour, is Master of two worlds; and one of them the mass of mankind will hardly recognise. The world of the natural is the world of things as they are in their nature—matter, physical life, mind. The world of the supernatural is the world of things to which the gift of God has added a beauty or a power which their original make or composition does not demand, and could never rise to by itself. The existence of the world or realm of the supernatural follows from one fact—the fact that God has wished man to have as his last end no less a beatitude than the vision of Himself face to face, even ‘as He is.’² Human nature was to live for ever (so its Creator wished) in the fires of the Beatific Vision; and therefore it was to be gifted with a gift which should enable it to merit that Vision, and to look upon it without being consumed. The gift is called Grace here below; when the passage of death is passed it is called Glory. But both before the judgment and after it, the gift is a real gift of the soul

² 1 St. John iii, 2.

not a mere extrinsic relation or denomination. There are no legal fictions with Almighty God. If He calls a man holy, he is holy; if He looks upon him with favour, he is favoured; if He holds him gracious or acceptable, he has grace. And it is the realm of grace, with its sources in God's good-will, its effects as a state or a power on the soul of man, its results on bliss everlasting, which is summed up in the word supernatural. Of this world Jesus Christ is Creator and King.

Hitherto, in the preceding discourses, we have looked at what might be called the earthly aspect of Faith. We have been considering Faith chiefly as a state or an effect in man's nature. We have viewed it with reference to the Gospel teachings, with reference to prejudice, and with reference to the wilfulness of the heart itself. Not unfrequently, it is true, our glance has been raised from the earth to the heavens. We have all along recognised that the source of Faith is higher than any earthly level; and now it is necessary to enter more minutely into this consideration. To say, and to try to impress on the heart of man, that Faith is a gift of God, is in many ways the most important part of the task of one who seeks to prepare minds for Belief; and therefore I have begun to-day by speaking of the power of the Prince of Peace. For Faith, though not absolutely the beginning of the exercise of His supernatural power in the heart, is the beginning or foundation of His permanent reign therein.

What has been said on the subject of Faith will probably have led many of you to lay it down as certain that to have Faith, or to hold it, is a very difficult thing.

Although Belief is so natural to us that a great part of our rational life is made up of simply believing, yet to believe in the Gospel and to believe in the Church, we must, it would seem, both put strong pressure upon ourselves, and resist with great determination several adverse influences. And this is true. Faith is not easy to the unassisted human heart. If I were saying all that had to be said on the subject, I should add, that Faith without help from above was impossible. But there can be no doubt that it is difficult. To believe, the mind must have a power of keen sight and of far sight, in order to be able to see things distant and things unnoticed by the crowd; a sight like that of the sailor, whose eye is trained to see the coming sail when as yet it looks a mere speck on the line where land and sea meet. To believe, there must be a conscious inward exertion—a gathering up of will-power—a clinging fast with intellectual grasp. In other words, Belief or Faith (granting it to be a desirable thing) is a virtue; for the old and the true meaning of virtue is the activity of moral and spiritual power towards good. But virtue must be in a man before it can come out of him. If a man does an act of kindness, it is because he is kind; if he behaves justly, it is because he is just. It is the same as in physical matters; if a man deals a heavy blow, or runs swiftly, it is because he is muscular and healthy.

To believe, then, as God would have us believe, we must possess the virtue of Faith.

A man who hears this might, if he knew no better, cry out in despair, How can I get the virtue of Faith?

But all of you who know the Catholic teaching are aware that God's providence has provided for us here, through the blood of Jesus Christ. To those who know where to look for the virtue of Faith there is no difficulty in finding it. The truth is, that God is ready to *give it to us*. When God gives a man a virtue, that virtue is said to be *infused*. God 'pours' the grace of it into his soul. Such virtues begin to exist in the heart on a certain day and hour; the greatest of them without any merit, or procuring, or practising on the part of man. It is thus that we believe that there come into our hearts the three great theological and preëminently Christian virtues of Faith, Hope, and Charity. They are God's work within us, not our acquisition. They are given directly by God's hand. They are like the rain of heaven, falling on the hill-tops, and gathering into great pools in the hollow places, or rushing in white streams down the furrowed mountain-side. They are instantaneous in their coming, copious, and mighty. Whilst the virtues of human nature itself, though they too may come or may be increased in the same way, are most often like the scanty supplies of water which toiling and panting men carry up to barren heights where the rain of heaven does not fall.

It is the presence of these 'infused' Christian virtues in the soul of man which constitutes his supernatural life. In the case of infants, they are infused by the Sacrament of Baptism. It is not meant that an unconscious child can believe, can hope, or can love its Maker: but it receives a real power in its soul—a power which will remain latent until its body and its brain mature,

but a power which is quite as real as its reason or its immortal soul itself. To the conscious and mature mind of a grown-up man or woman, this life and these virtues come in various ways, and they have various states and vicissitudes. In such a one, the gift of Faith is preceded and heralded by other emotions of grace. Faith may be found without love ; and Faith of this kind is dead Faith, from which no living work can proceed. But Love can never be without Faith. And, finally, even Faith itself may be deliberately sacrificed and lost. As to the moral virtues—the virtues of the dutiful child, the loyal subject, the kindly neighbour, the honest man—these are ‘christianised,’ so to speak, by the light and warmth of the three virtues which are Christian by excellence. The moral virtues, without ‘these three,’ are the virtues of a pagan—good qualities, and praiseworthy, but useless unto life everlasting. And they are not only christianised by their presence, but purified widened, strengthened, made heroic. They are weapons or tools which would not avail us to build mansions beyond the barriers of this earth ; but when the hand of the Spirit grasps them, they become transfigured with the strength of the Spirit.

And, to complete this brief account of the supernatural life, two other of its phenomena must be noticed. The first is, the continual stream of ‘actual’ grace which Almighty God, through the blood of Jesus, lovingly rains down upon every soul of man : good desires, fervent purposes, sorrow for sin, and every holy emotion. And the second is the sevenfold gift of the Holy Ghost. Though all grace is a gift, yet there are

seven marked and peculiar graces which are especially called gifts. They are read in the prophet Isaías ; and they are Wisdom, Understanding, Counsel, Knowledge, Fortitude, Piety, and the Fear of the Lord. These are something more than the soul's life, even though that life be the life of grace. Have you ever seen some mighty beast crouch down in silence before the uplifted finger of a man ? Have you ever seen the eye of a child light up with intelligence and love at the word of injunction uttered by a wise and kind master ? Or have you ever meditated in silence on the scene which once took place on the shores of Genesareth, when Peter and Andrew, James and John, left father and mother and all things at the call of a voice and the gesture of a hand ? The Holy Spirit is our Master and our Teacher ; and it has pleased Him to put certain gifts into our hearts, when He is there, by which we feel Him when He moves us to act—certain chords or springs which vibrate to His voice, and answer to His touch ; so that we are docile to His inspirations, and easily follow whither He leads. These gifts are the completion of the supernatural life. It is these gifts, fully used, unimpeded by little sins (great sins, I need not say, banish them altogether), which carry on to perfection the growth of the holiness of those heroes of the supernatural life whom we call the Saints.

It is difficult to get a hearing when one preaches the fact of the supernatural life. Even of those who read the New Testament and accept it, many do not really admit such a realm or region as I have been describing. Possibilities such as these are, no doubt, very

awful, and give human life a colour and meaning which may easily startle any one who thinks seriously. But New Testament phrases contain the whole truth on which we have been insisting. What else can be meant by such expressions as 'putting on Jesus Christ,' 'putting on the new man,' 'being engrafted on Christ,' 'walking in grace,' and 'washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb'? The supernatural life has a principle of its own, an object of its own, acts of its own, processes of its own. You cannot see it or measure it, but there it is, under your eyes, in the men or women whom, perhaps, you sit beside or pass in the streets. Those who live the supernatural life seem outwardly not very different from other men; and they join in the world's business as other men do. But they have thoughts, powers, a food, a living principle, and an elaborate life, such as the world never guesses. Sometimes the supernatural shines out. It does so when the world sees men ready to die—dying perhaps—for faith and justice; when men sacrifice themselves for their brothers' souls; when they are united to God after a special manner; and whenever grand examples of Christian heroism are given to the wondering world. The supernatural, though a secret power and a hidden one, is the greatest power in the world. It is the power of the Cross; it is the power of the Spirit. Though evil must ever be, and scandals come, no specific form of evil or scandal ever finally puts down the supernatural. Philosophers tell us that hidden fire moulds this globe of ours. There is a hidden fire at work among you, about you, under you, which is continually acting on the world. It works

mostly in silence, carrying out its appointed ministry. But it bursts out in volcano eruptions sometimes; and the houses that kings have built, and the vineyards and the gardens which have grown green and have ripened on the earth above, are shaken, are ruined, and are swept away. How many times the mere force of hidden supernatural power—faith, love, prayer, penance—has changed the surface of the world!

And every soul of man is meant to live this supernatural life. Every soul which does not live this life is dead. But the souls which possess it, possess something which makes them eagles in flight, giants in strength. There was once that Samson was set upon by his own countrymen and carried off to be delivered up to the Philistines. They beset his home in the cave of the rock, and they seized him, and bound him with 'two new cords;' then they marched him out to the Philistine host, which was encamped in the very land of Juda itself, in a spot afterwards famous to all time as the place of the Jawbone. The Philistines saw their enemy and their scourge dragged in bonds to be surrendered to their power, and the whole army was in joyful commotion, and rushed forward with shouts of triumph to take possession of him. But mark what ensued! 'The Spirit of the Lord came strongly upon him; and as the flax is wont to be consumed at the approach of fire, so the bands with which he was bound were broken and loosed. And finding a jawbone, even the jawbone of an ass which lay there, catching it up, he slew therewith a thousand men.'³ The phrase which is so familiar to

³ Judges xv. 14.

Holy Scripture when describing the great actions of the ancient heroes—the Spirit of the Lord fell upon him—is the phrase which best of all expresses the state of the soul which is possessed of the supernatural life of God's grace. It is the giving of the Spirit, no longer as formerly, 'by measure,' to special individuals for special purposes, but in abundance. 'You are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise,'⁴ says St. Paul. And according to St. Paul, we are to walk (that is, to live and act) in the Spirit; the Spirit dwelleth in us, is given to us, is spread abroad in our hearts, and gives us hope and strength. It is this Spirit of power, filling the heart as He formerly filled the Holy of Holies in the Temple, who snaps asunder the bonds of sin, and enables men and women with the poorest and meanest of natural capacities to put so many hosts of opposing difficulties to flight, and win their way to Jerusalem at last.

We are speaking about Faith, and we seem to have embarked on the wide subject of the whole supernatural life. And it is natural to have done so. The battle of the cause of God's revelation must be fought on the question of Faith; for Faith is the position, the narrow pass in the mountain chain, by which the soul must enter into the peaceful realm of habitual grace and charity and Christian virtues. The world is divided into two clearly-marked divisions by the line where Faith begins. On the one side are the unbelievers; that is to say, either the darkness of the heathen, to whom Christ's tidings have not been preached, or the indiffer-

⁴ Eph. i. 13.

ence of the incredulous worldly who live only for the time that passes away, or the opposition of the reasoning sceptics who do not see, or the hostility of the apostates who have seen and grown blind again. On the other side are those who believe; either those whose Belief is living by charity, and shows itself in good works, or whose Belief, though dead as far as merit or acceptableness is concerned, is yet a real quality or habit, wrapping the poor sinful soul about, keeping alive some dispositions to grace, some preparation for repentance, some inclination to virtue, some fond remembrance of past devotion; just as the soldier who has deserted his colours may still wear his uniform till it turns to rags, and still cherish, unconsciously perhaps, the erect bearing, the firm step, the trained skill which he learned under the banner of his duty.

The question of Faith, then, is in many respects the question of the hour. Give the preacher an audience who *believe*, and he can hope to startle them into fear, or to raise their hearts to the love of God. But to preach to a generation which does not believe is as if one spoke to those who had shut the door and left the speaker out in the cold. And therefore what has been said about the supernatural life and infused virtue, since it applies in the closest way to Faith, is of extreme importance. There are some who find Faith difficult to attain, and yet who long for Faith; and there are others who are indifferent or hostile to Faith. The first should be encouraged to hope and trust, and to petition the Giver of all good gifts. The latter should bethink themselves that they are like men who walk the earth

and yet argue about the ether of the planetary spaces; on our theory they cannot expect to arrive at true knowledge about matters of revelation. For we believe that Faith is an infused gift of God, and a virtue of the Spirit.

Let it be observed, therefore, that Faith is a gift not merely in the sense that God has given us revelation. It is doubtless a great and stupendous gift that the Creator bestows upon the world when He speaks to it and reveals truths which it would either have perverted or never known. But it is not in this sense that I am now calling Faith a gift. God has given us the 'objects' of our Belief; but He also gives us the 'faculty' of Belief itself. In describing this faculty, as in describing other moral and spiritual faculties, we are obliged to speak chiefly of its objects; we best explain what it is by mentioning what it can do. But it is a distinct thing from any of its acts, and from all of them.

But in calling Faith a supernatural quality or faculty which God 'infuses,' we are not denying that it resides in or qualifies the natural human intelligence. It is our own mind and will which believe; and Belief is not an act which goes on outside of them or independently of them, as if some bright spirit from the heavens were to animate a human body. It is the 'heart' which believes unto justice, as it is the 'mouth' which confesses our belief unto salvation.⁵ Faith is a supernatural gift, but it rests on nature and glorifies nature; just as the rainbow, whose arch is in the skies, seems to stand upon the wood, the hill, the meadow, which it transforms.

⁵ Romans x. 10.

It is this transformation of human minds and hearts which shows how great a gift is the gift of supernatural Faith. In the first place, it is a gift which makes the heart look up directly to God, its maker and its last end. There is a sense in which God is the only object of Faith. The reason is that belief means an acceptance of God's revelation because it is God's revelation : it means the clinging to dogma, to creed, or to formula, because God has made it known. Nothing can come within the scope of Divine Faith which is not part of the revelation of God. Faith, therefore, is the faculty which takes note of the communications that have reached the earth from the awful silence of the heavens. God speaks to our hearts and beings in many ways, and we have many sensitive organs that tell us of His word and His will ; but when He deigned to speak in accents which human nature could not claim to hear, He also gave us a new sense to take such accents in. He spoke in the tongue of the Kingdom of Heaven ; it was a strange tongue to the beings whom He had made of clay. Even the immortal spirit, made after His own likeness, had no key to it. But that immortal spirit could receive, if it could not demand. It could look up to the clouds where the fiery chariot was whirling out of sight, and long for the prophet's mantle. And the mantle fell ; the spirit received the gift of Faith, and new visions, fresh realms of truth, which prophets had not guessed at and ancient saints but dimly seen, were opened to every 'little one' on whom the gift had come. It was a gift which created a new world. It discerned things essentially invisible to sense or mere mind. It peopled

this world below with innumerable existences, hidden under the curtains and the mists of matter. It set up for all humanity the ladder of the patriarch—which rested on the barren earth, on the stone that was his pillow, and at whose summit were the open heavens and God Himself, whilst radiance streamed down and angels flitted to and fro. It was the ‘argument,’ or solid conviction of ‘things unseen;’ the ‘substance,’ or firmly grasped reality, of what was ‘hoped for.’⁶ By it, and by nothing else, was rendered possible the life, the way, the conduct, which lead to the Beatific Vision. It ‘realised’ God in this world, and that after the deeper and more awful fashion in which He is revealed by His own word.

If there is such a wonderful gift and endowment of the soul as Faith, it is no wonder that, in spite of wilfulness and in spite of prejudice, there is such a thing as ardent belief in God’s revelation. I have said that Faith is a gift which is bestowed upon the heart in order to enable it, as by some new faculty, to live and move in an invisible and supernatural world—or, in other words, to realise God the Creator. The difficulties which prevent the heart from accepting or looking for this invisible supernatural world are chiefly, as I have also said, hesitation as to the proofs of revelation, prejudice or preoccupation, and wilfulness. Now no religious system or theory could deal with these difficulties which did not, like the Catholic Church, start with the supposition that Providence has destined for man a special gift or endowment to help him over them.

⁶ Heb. xi. 1.

Take the first. Hesitation as to the proof of revelation arises either from inability to see the force of the proofs, or, more commonly, from inability to get rid of some staggering objection. The *proofs* of revelation are not so strong and overwhelming to us as the proofs of many far less important matters. They are sufficient to prove its existence ; especially they are sufficient to prove the existence of a teaching Church. But since they lie in a sphere which the mind of the ordinary man and woman of the world's millions is not familiar with, and since they have to be held with an earnest grasp as motives and master-thoughts, the human mind must be helped to take them in, and helped to hold them. There is many a truth which men do not accept merely because it is crushed out of sight by the rush of other truths ; and there is many a conviction which lies asleep and is hardly a conviction. And revelation might be, and would be, no better than such a truth and such a conviction to the multitudes were it not for the special gift of Faith. The *objections* to revelation are none of them, perhaps, unanswerable ; but if they were, it must be remembered that an unanswered difficulty (unless it be a proof positive of the opposite) may often confront us without making us waver in our belief. The answers to our difficulties may lie, like the explanations of wind and weather, in spheres we cannot investigate. We must often be content with seeing that undoubted facts do not contradict us, without always being able to harmonise every fact with our position and theory. And, remembering this, we can always see, when dealing with the difficulties of

revelation, that there would arise difficulties a hundred times more serious if revelation were itself a fiction. But it is a part of the weakness of the human mind to be unable to look at an argument as a whole. A small particular difficulty is frequently quite sufficient to produce doubt or disbelief in matters where there should be unhesitating acceptance. And the gift of Faith is meant to remedy this weakness, as far as revelation is concerned. By it the mind receives a certain magnetic attraction to divine truth. By it the intelligence so concentrates its gaze upon God's Word that the difficulties on this side and on that are but slightly felt. By it, above all, the mental faculties of the humble Christian are raised to that grand generalisation which in matters of science only the master-minds attain, that a vast, grand, and harmonious system cannot be seriously endangered by difficulties of detail; that when a man, basking in the sunshine, feels a sudden chill, it is more reasonable to suppose that a little cloud is passing over him than that there is no sun.

The influence of a gift like Faith on human prejudice need hardly be pointed out. Prejudice is the pre-occupation of the mind by views which the heart takes kindly to. Prejudice is more than difficulty; it is mental attitude; it is, as it were, a form of intuition. And it may be dishonest. If prejudice be dishonestly held, the gift of Faith, by disposing the heart to prefer the kingdom of God to the world and the flesh, tends indirectly to dissolve it. And if it be honest, the gift destroys it by, so to speak, altering its focus. The moment new truth can be got within the range of mental

sight, or the sight itself be distracted to see otherwise than straight on in front, prejudice begins to die. And Faith helps prejudice to look over its gaol-wall; to note the disregarded fields and pastures on either side of its iron road; to catch sight of many a diamond lying in the dust of its own unwatered track; and when prejudice has thus been induced to admit there is goodness and truth elsewhere than it had all along taken for granted, the dawn of the day is not far off.

As for wilfulness—that moral obstacle which bars out Belief as the sand-bank blocks the harbour's mouth when the tide is low—the gift of Faith is given to destroy it utterly. The gift of Faith bends stubborn necks and bows down lofty thoughts. If Belief is an obedience, a captivity, a humbling of the heart, a gift was needed before Belief could be prevalent in the race of man. Belief is as much a moral act as it is an act of the intelligence. It demands pious and devout submission to the teaching of God, humility and docility towards the voice of God's Church, and a sensitive search for, and joyful acceptance of, every jot and tittle of divinely-inspired or divinely-protected teaching. The heavenly gift of Faith is meant, not merely to sharpen the intellectual sight, but to fill the heart with worship.

When all these various conditions are combined—when proof and argument are steadily realised, when objections and difficulties are passed by, when preoccupying mental habits have been dissolved, when humility and piety reign in the will—then Belief is what is called firm. And firmness is the result of the gift of Faith. It is this great gift which enables the child whose brain

has just matured enough to let its spirit act, to adhere without hesitation and without rashness to that 'form of words' which it has already made its own. It is this gift which makes the rude untaught poor, the working man, the poor man's wife, the millions of the fields and the streets, not only acquiesce in their Faith, but cling to it, act upon it, fight for it, or die for it. It is this gift which brings the rich, the intellectual, and the noble, in the flower of their age and the maturity of their powers, to the feet of men who are often their inferiors in everything but the being the dispensers of the mysteries of God. It is this gift which inspires a horror of heresy and a distrust of dogmatic science; which secures a kindly reception for first tidings of the miraculous; and which moves believers to reverence every utterance of Popes and pastors. It is this gift, often half-smothered under a load of worldliness and vain solicitude, which lives in the hearts of Catholics, which prompts them to many a generous labour or sacrifice for the Church, which opens their ears to the word of God, and brings them to the sacred tribunal and the holy table. It is the want of this gift of Faith which leaves clear-sighted men in unbelief, honest men in heresy, good-hearted men in antagonism to Catholicism, and proud men in darkness; and it is the weakness of the gift which not unfrequently makes Catholics ashamed of their profession, or keeps them aloof from their pastors or their fellow-Catholics in sentiment or in practice. For Faith is the 'victory which overcomes the world;' it is the precious root of life which the Lord when He comes

'1 John v. 5.

in the latter day shall hardly find, alas! in all the earth.

Let no one, then, believer or unbeliever, forget that Faith is a gift of Jesus Christ. Let the Catholic who too often trifles with his Faith by indifference, by criticism, and by too 'liberal' views, remember that he is entirely in the hands of God. If the divine influx ceased, his Faith would wither up and be found no more. And let the honest inquirer be fully persuaded that the knowledge of history, of controversy, and of grammar is of little use without humility of mind, personal goodness, and earnest prayer. The object of these discourses has been to show that the preparation for Faith must be a preparation of the will; that Faith is a moral and voluntary act, and not the necessary submission of the intelligence to overwhelming light; that the Spirit of Faith is not that of criticism and discussion, but of captivity and obedience; finally, that Faith is not an acquisition, but a gift. There has been no desire or intention of undervaluing study, research, and controversial writing or preaching; in God's providence all these things are most valuable. But the light of the sun is of little use as long as the shutters are closed.

And if I were asked for one royal road to the happiness of Faith, I should answer, with all the Saints, that it is prayer. No one who prays can be lost. God wishes all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. But He has not promised to save those who are so immersed in the pleasantness or the business of this life as to give Him no share in their thoughts and none of the worship which is His right. We must

bow to His majesty and beg for His precious gift. We must make ourselves feel, with all the fervour of our heart, that we are helpless if He do not help us, and blind if He do not enlighten us. And He will hear the prayer of the humble heart. Be sure that He will hear. Whether it be that He gives us new reasons or helps us the better to penetrate old ones ; whether He send us a man, or a book, or an inspiration ; whether He cast us down as with a lightning stroke, or lay his hand gently upon our eyes and ears, let us be assured that He will hear us. If He must send His angel from the heavens to teach us, then His angel will be sent. But it is He alone, and not ourselves, who can open our eyes and let us see the light.

THE GOOD THINGS OF CHRIST.

All these, being approved by the testimony of Faith, received not the promise; God providing some better thing for us, that they should not be perfected without us. HEBREWS xi. 39, 40.

OUR subject this evening is the 'Sacraments.' I hope to make clear what is meant by a Sacrament, and to point out what kind of proof there is in the New Testament for the existence of Sacraments. I spoke last Sunday of the ministry of the New Testament. I drew your attention to the fact that the New Law was to be a new dispensation of grace; its ministers to be more powerful and its ordinances more effectual. The ancient law was glorious, as St. Paul tells us; yet in comparison with the new it was the ministry of death, of condemnation. It could confer no life, though the neglect of its ordinances entailed death. It was a stepmother who did not feed the children, yet thrust them out to perish if they transgressed. It was a house wherein the 'shadows of good things' dwelt, not the 'very image.'¹ The tabernacle of skins which the wandering tribes bore about with them, and set down on the soil of the wilderness beneath the shadows of the rocks of Sinai—which they pitched with their tents and struck again when the trumpets sounded

¹ Heb. xi.; Col. ii. 17.

the march.—this was a figure of the whole dispensation. And the temple of stone, of cedar, and of precious metals which succeeded the tabernacle of the wanderings, and was itself its reproduction in nobler materials, carried the figure on to the coming of Jesus. It was a house in which God's glory dwelt, wherein His favour rested upon prayer; but nothing within its walls could touch the body of a man and heal his soul. An 'ampler and more perfect Tabernacle' came.² A House of a different kind was built up, not made with mortal hands. It did not contain, as the former tabernacle had done, only the 'shadow of good things to come.' It contained the very image of them. That is, it contained things which are designated in Holy Scripture by such names as 'the promise,'³ 'some better thing,'⁴ the 'very image.' But even the things of the New Testament, be it remarked, great as they were to be, were not the consummation. Yet another dispensation was to come and all would be over—the vision of the brightness of God in our eternal home and country. But the Christian dispensation was to stand midway between mere 'shadows' and blissful realisation. There was to be in it sufficient reality to distinguish it utterly from the law of types, ceremonies, and external purifications. But it was to be sufficiently symbolical itself, and sufficiently dependent in the external and sensible, to make it very different from the heaven to which it was to lead.

As I have already remarked (but it is a remark which is most important), this prerogative of the New Law could not mean merely that grace was to be had; be-

² Heb. ix. 11.

³ Heb. xi. 39.

⁴ Heb. xi. 40.

cause grace, and the self-same Saviour's grace, had always been at hand ever since the promise; but it must mean that the Law itself, as a dispensation, as a ritual, as an economy, as an outward arrangement, was to have the power and the virtue of imparting grace. It was to be a house with a deep well of pleasant and healing waters, which were to give life to those who drank. It was to cover the Saviour's fountains; and the gifts which had been from the beginning were now to begin to be through the *medium* of a dispensation.

It is very few of those outside the Church who seize the true sense and significance of the Catholic sacramental system. The word 'Sacrament' has not had always, or exclusively, the sense in which it is used in the pages of the Catechism. In the New Testament 'Sacrament' usually means a secret and sacred thing. Thus the great doctrines of the Christian revelation are called Sacraments. It is in this sense that St. Paul, for instance, speaks of the 'Sacrament of the will of God, which He Himself hath made known to us.'⁵ The word is also used in early ecclesiastical writings to mean a 'sign of a sacred thing,' of whatever kind, established by divine authority, or even by human institution. But the word 'Sacrament,' as now used in the Church, has a very much more momentous meaning. With us, a Sacrament is a sign, indeed, but a sign which differs from other signs, or symbolical acts, in its efficacy and what it signifies. It is a sign which signifies sanctifying grace, and not only signifies it, but produces it. The ancient Jewish washings and lustrations

⁵ Eph. i. 9.

signified spiritual purity, but did not effect anything. Christian Baptism not only signifies interior cleansing, but really and efficaciously, if no obstacle be present, brings it about.

I can imagine a well-disposed critic raising an objection here. What right, it will be said, has the Church to change the meaning of the word Sacrament? If Sacrament in the New Testament only means a 'mystery' or a 'doctrine,' how is it that you make out Sacraments to be such wonder-working rites or ceremonies? The answer is that we do not attempt to prove the Catholic sacramental doctrine from the occurrence of the *word* sacrament in the New Testament. Sacraments, in the Catholic sense, do doubtless come within the range of St. Paul's use of the word; because they form a part, and a very important part, of the Christian revelation. But we take our own definition of the word, and we assert (and prove) that the thing answering to this definition really does exist in the pages of the New Testament—although the name Sacrament may not be applied to it. Sacrament had a wide meaning when St. Paul wrote; it is now restricted to a narrower sense. Such changes of the signification of words occur in all languages and in every art. Thus the word 'parliament,' which originally meant an assembly of men whom the sovereign consulted or listened to, and which in neighbouring countries never meant anything more important than a superior law-court, means, with us in England, the supreme assembly of the nation. What we call Sacraments were known as such to the Apostles (so we contend), although they did not apply the name of Sacrament exclusively to them.

How the gradual narrowing of the word came about it is easy to understand. The word is a Latin word. It was never really the equivalent of the Greek word 'mystery.' It always denoted something which, whilst it was sacred and secret, was also symbolical. What could be more natural, therefore, than that it should by degrees begin to cling to those most important sacred signs which were at once symbolical ceremonies and essential portions of Christian teaching. But, after all, the application of a term is not extremely important. If the *thing* can be proved to exist, most persons will not quarrel about the name. Names are important, no doubt. They are the purses into which we put the mintings of our mind; and we shut them, and put them in our pockets; but we can always open them again and reckon what they contain. With the Church, names are very venerable. She will not meddle with a doctrinal or scriptural name if she can help it. Names are handy for learned clerks, for theologians and for priests; but to the unlettered or unskilled they are indispensable. To them a name is, first, the outward shape and picture of a doctrine or a truth, and then the centre or nucleus round which new notions gather, like ice gathers in a winter's night round the twig which dips into the stream. And names are not only pictures, more or less elaborated, and capable of indefinite deepening of lines and colours, but they are banners that wave out and fire the heart, and touch a thousand springs of memory and association. And therefore the Church is wary in suffering a name to be changed. When lawful growth and natural alteration have made verbal changes ex-

pedient, she lets the changes come. But otherwise she knows that to alter well-known names is like pulling up a growing tree and planting it afresh in different soil.

I give the following definition of a Sacrament: 'An outward sign of inward grace, ordained by Jesus Christ, by which grace is conveyed to our souls.' First of all, a Sacrament is a sign, or a significant and symbolic action. Thus in Baptism, there is a pouring of water, rendered still more significant by the accompanying words, 'I baptize thee.' Thus in Holy Orders there is the external symbolical rite of imposition of hands, joined with the words, 'Receive the Holy Ghost.'

In the second place, this sign must produce real interior grace. A rite or ceremony, however holy, which did not affect interior grace, we should not call a Sacrament. Thus, there is the beautiful ordinance of the Washing of the Feet, which takes place on Maundy Thursday. Christ washed the feet of His disciples, and He commanded us to wash one another's feet. In compliance with this command, the ritual books of the Church for Holy Week have a solemn service of the Washing of the Feet, and princes, nobles, bishops, superiors, in imitation of their Lord and Master, wash the feet of a certain number of their fellow-Christians, as a protestation that they desire to be humble as Jesus Christ was humble. This rite is not a Sacrament, because although it is a significant ceremony, and also instituted and recommended by Christ, there is no indication that it is meant to confer interior grace. The Scriptures do not say so, and the Church has not learnt

so. But the case is very different with Baptism, or with Holy Orders, as we shall see.

Thirdly, the sacred signs or ceremonies which produce grace do not produce it by *their own* power. It is evident, on the very surface, that unless Jesus Christ, who promulgated the New Law, instituted such rites, out of the plenitude of His power, no such rites can exist. No being who had not the power of the Godhead could establish such a dispensation as this. In the nature of things, there is no connection whatever between an external washing or anointing, even if accompanied by expressive words, and the inner sanctification of the spiritual soul. It would be the grossest materialism to assert that water could confer grace, by its own nature or natural properties. The cause of the interior grace, therefore, in the soul of the recipient is not the water, or the oil, or the laying on of hands, or the priest's words, but it is *God's power in and through these outward acts*. When the priest baptizes, it is Christ who baptizes. When the bishop confirms, it is Christ who confirms. When the penitent in the confessional listens to the words of absolution, it is Christ who absolves. And so through the list. It is evident, then, how falsely and foolishly those who believe in the Sacraments are taunted with believing in magic. Magic is the use of words or signs for the purpose of obtaining the assistance of the evil spirits; or at least, with the object of obtaining effects with which the acts have no connection. But we, in using the Sacraments, invoke the name of the Lord our God, who made both heaven and earth; and we quote

His own word to prove that He meant us to use them, and meant to operate by them. This is not magic.

Fourthly, when we say that no acts on the part of the recipient are required, the words must be carefully explained. If a vessel be full of sand or mud, you cannot pour pure water into it. It is full. Remove the obstacle, empty and cleanse it, and then the water may be poured in. The removing of the impediments is necessary; but this is not the same thing as the refilling of the vessel. Thus it is with the Sacraments. In those who receive a Sacrament (putting infants aside, in whom there can be no obstacle to Baptism, because they are unconscious), certain interior acts are required, which constitute *the removal of hindrances*. Thus, if a grown person have to be baptized, he or she must believe, must hope, and must begin to wish to serve God. But these acts do not *justify*. It is only when, in addition to his having removed impediments in the shape of unbelief and deordination of will, the candidate submits to the rite of Baptism, that he is cleansed and made just. Something similar occurs in all the Sacraments. For instance, in the Sacrament of Penance, the words of absolution would be of no use unless there preceded them, in the heart of the recipient, a true sorrow for sins and the beginnings of the love of God; but even with these dispositions, justification does not ensue until the words are pronounced. I do not say that, in some cases, justification does not precede Baptism or Penance. This is possible; because God is not bound by His own laws; and intense acts of His love are both Baptism and Absolution. But in the great multitude of instances this is not so. The

Sacraments are meant for the multitude. And in the cases in which the Sacrament of the Spirit precedes the sensible sign, still it is part of God's law that that sensible sign should be submitted to; and an unwillingness thus to submit proves peremptorily that there is no true love of God, and therefore no operation of the Spirit, and therefore no justification, on the part of those who thus say they love their God yet refuse to obey His commandments.

These things being explained, let us apply to the New Testament, and endeavour to discover whether this sacramental view, so explained, finds any countenance there. Are there any sacred signs, instituted by Christ, by which grace is conveyed? Do justification and sanctification come by outward visible arts?

There are three sorts of texts in the New Testament regarding the mode in which the Redemption of Jesus Christ is conveyed to the soul of sinful man. First, there are those texts in which justification is said to come from an interior act; for instance, from faith, from the fear of God, from repentance, and from the love which flows from repentance. Many of my hearers would supply me at once with abundance of texts of this kind. Justified by faith, saved by repentance, sanctified by charity—these are expressions exceedingly common in the New Testament. There is a second class of texts—the texts which attach justification or sanctification to an external condition. Among such external acts or signs are, for instance, the preaching and hearing of the Gospel, the being baptized, the imposition of hands, the eating of the Eucharistic bread, the anointing of the

sick with prayer, and the binding and loosing of sins. I will not weary you with quoting a text for each of these external acts; but you know that grace or holiness, in some sense, is annexed to each of them. I pass on to point out a third class of texts. There are numerous texts which join the internal act and the external sign together. Thus, our Lord says, 'Whoever believeth and is baptized, shall be saved.'⁶ Thus St. Peter says, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you, for the remission of our sins.'⁷ These texts prove that the two kinds of acts, the interior and the exterior, do not exclude each other. They are mutually compatible. A man coming to Christ must believe; but he must also be baptized. These texts are very significant, because they express the Catholic doctrine that the Sacraments justify, but that, in adults at least, human acts must prepare the way. For we do not exclude *human acts*; but we maintain that *God's own act*, through the Sacraments, really confers grace.

If we look a little more closely into what the New Testament says of one Sacrament, that of Baptism, their power of giving real grace comes out more clearly still. Our Lord and Saviour had taken hold of the simple, natural ceremony of Baptism, a ceremony which had been used in some shape by many peoples over a wide surface of the earth, and, glorifying it as He did with many humble and weak elements, lifted it up into a dispensation conferring grace and Church membership. He went down into the water Himself, and as the Precursor, in fear and reverence, allowed the

⁶ Mark xvi. 16.

⁷ Acts ii. 38.

stream to flow over His sacred body, the waters received, so to speak, the spirit of holiness, the Spirit brooding over them as in days of old; and the Baptism that was to come was to be the Baptism of the Spirit. Christ adopted Baptism. 'Unless a man be born again, of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven.'⁸ Thus He spoke to that convert of His who came to Him by night. 'Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them.' He said this to His Apostles at the solemn moment at which He was giving them their final charge. This is, without doubt, the institution of a sacred sign. So the Church has always understood it. St. Paul speaks of it as being a well-known ceremony, calling it 'the laver,' or bath 'of water, with the Word of Life.'⁹ But this outward sign conveyed grace. 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.' To be saved means to be endowed with sanctifying or habitual grace. The same expression occurs in the Epistle to Titus, where St. Paul says, 'He hath saved us by the laver of regeneration' (bath of the new birth) 'and renovation of the Holy Ghost.'¹⁰ And the practice of the Apostles fully confirms their teaching. St. Peter, in the very first sermon he preached, said to the Jews who asked him what they must do, 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the Holy Ghost.'¹¹ St. Paul, in his speech on the stairs of the castle of Jerusalem, cites the words spoken to him by Ananias, at Damascus, 'Arise, and be

⁸ John iii. 5.⁹ Eph. v. 26; viii.¹⁰ Titus iii. 5.¹¹ Acts ii. 38.

baptized, and wash away thy sins.' ¹² In a passage already alluded to, St. Paul speaks of the laver or bath of regeneration. All the Fathers have understood this to refer to baptism. Calvin himself expressly agrees with them. ¹³ Protestant interpreters of recent date, as Bishop Blomfield, coincide. But what is a bath of regeneration? It is a bath or washing by which the new birth is given us—which is justification through Jesus Christ. There is, again, a remarkable passage from St. Peter's first epistle: 'Once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noe, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is eight souls, were saved by water. Whereunto baptism being of the like form doth also now save you (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' ¹⁴ As the ark saved Noe and his family, so baptism saves Christians by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Baptism is a mere empty ceremony, what did St. Peter mean by this? Thus I believe it is perfectly evident from the New Testament that the sign of Baptism was instituted by Jesus Christ, and endowed with power to save, to regenerate, to sanctify.

It is well that we have the evidence for Baptism so clear in Holy Scripture. The admission of baptismal regeneration, rightly understood, is the admission of all the Sacraments. It is the admission of the principle of sacramentalism that an outward act produces, by the

¹² Acts xxii. 16.

¹³ Calvin in Epist. ad locum.

¹⁴ 1 Peter iii. 20, 21.

will of Jesus Christ, an interior spiritual effect. I could go on to speak of the imposition of hands, of the anointing with oil, of the eating of the bread of the Eucharist, and of priestly absolution. But it is enough for my purpose to have explained what a Sacrament is, and to have illustrated this explanation by the text of Holy Scripture.

There are some who shrink from committing themselves to a religion of forms and ceremonies (as they express it). They have heard so much of certain catchwords, such as 'superstition,' 'change of heart,' 'worshipping in Spirit and in Truth,' that they have a great prejudice to conquer before they can even give a fair hearing to the sacramental view. Now *superstition* is an offence against the supreme duty of worship. It consists in placing spiritual efficacy in things in which there is none. Thus the Catholic doctrine of the Sacraments is as far as possible from superstition. It clings to the very words of Jesus Christ. The Catholic Church uses certain rites because He has instituted and ordained them.

In the next place, the Catholic sacramental doctrine, so far from dispensing man from *interior spiritual activity*, rather demands it and promotes it. No adult can receive a Sacrament (speaking broadly) without spiritual acts and dispositions on his own part; acts of faith and hope, the turning away from sin, the raising of the heart towards God. But the objections of objectors arise from their not seeing that a large amount of spiritual activity may exist without interior grace and acceptableness; and that even where both

grace and activity exist, further grace may be possible—higher powers and increased sanctity. Grace, whether taken in the sense of that first or primary sanctification by which man becomes regenerate, or as meaning that secondary increase which supervenes upon the first, is not a product of man's acts, and does not lie within the scope of his mere free will. It is from above. The skies rain it down; and unless they do rain it down, no earthly machinery, no human efforts, can water the barren clay of man's nature. And it is partly to put us in mind of this that the dispensation of the Incarnation and the whole sacramental system is instituted. Man must be helped by his Creator. And to obtain that help, he must bend down his own thought and will. No one can love unless he can worship; no one can worship unless he believes; and no one can believe unless he humbles his heart. The belief which leads to worship is not the being convinced of certain intellectual truths, as one takes in, for instance, the lesson of an earthly science. Belief is a virtue of the heart, as well as of the mind. And the sacramental system is meant to foster this. If a man says, 'I cannot submit to baptism,' 'I cannot kneel to priest or bishop,' 'I cannot be anointed,' he only says, in effect, I cannot humble myself to my Creator's ordinance.

And it is not true to say that an ordinance of interior humiliation would have sufficed without anything exterior. God knoweth our frame, and He knows it would not. What does the sacramental system imply, as to a man's behaviour? It implies a visible authority to whom he must submit, active effort to prepare and to receive,

contact with a human ministry who are his superiors in this respect, and a sort of endurance of the very elements, the humble creatures of water, oil, bread, or man's word, which are the instruments of supernal grace. It is the proud Naaman going humbly to wash in the despised Jewish stream. The external act, embraced with loving dutifulness, spreads the glow of loving humility in the heart; like rude toil and the endurance of elementary inclemency, it makes the blood flow more quickly, and it braces the bodily fibres with health and energy. We are body and soul, sense and spirit, nerve and intellect. Willingly to bend the neck, not only humbles the soul, but helps it to remain humble; what impresses our senses affects the spirit, and what disciplines our nerves reaches also to the very incorporeal thought and helps to mould it aright. Therefore God has given us, first the Man Christ Jesus, and then the Sacraments, in which He still subsists. He who bends to this outward ministration, and lives with simplicity in the midst of it, soon learns what it does for him, above and beyond the treasures of spiritual life which it pours upon his heart. It teaches him and it stimulates him. The spiritual and invisible truths relating to God and the world to come are easily lost sight of in a world of occupation like this. In some climates the air is always pure and clear, and the hills and the far horizon are visible as if close at hand. In ours, except on some few favoured days, the hickness of fog and mist hinders the view, and sometimes altogether shuts out the outlines we are most familiar with. So it is in our spiritual nature. Anything that reminds us of God and of our souls is a

blessing to us. Thus the churches, with their solemn spires and the voices of their bells, the words of preachers, and the examples of good men are valuable to us. And thus the sacramental system aids us. The Sacraments teach us. Living among them, as those who daily walk in a gallery of paintings or sculpture, we learn the meaning of the things we see. Each Sacrament is a symbol, always present, never moved away, of doctrine and institution. Baptism tells us of sin and grace, Confirmation of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Eucharist of our Lord Himself, and mysteries too numerous even to allude to, Penance of the future state and of present guilt, the last Unction of death and preparation for death, Holy Orders of the visible teaching Church, and Matrimony of the holiness of the Christian family—and every one of these preaches to us the never old tale of the coming of our blessed Lord, and of the efficacy of His precious blood. And the sacramental system has a peculiar power in making us what is called ‘realise’ divine truth. Take the Sacrament of Penance. You may read a long time about repentance and the guilt of sin, and you may remain cold and unmoved; but if you enter a Catholic church and see the people waiting to go to confession, you begin to realise what your reading means. You see old people and little children, people dressed comfortably and people in rags, busy shopkeeping people, young men, young girls, kneeling about, serious and earnest, thinking about their souls’ concerns, and doing their best to excite themselves to a sorrowful feeling for their offences against their loving Creator. It is a great lesson. It means reality, and it is a reality

to the heart of the spectator. And it ought to lead him to make a reflection on the dispositions of people who live in the sacramental system. Do they worship less in spirit and truth than their neighbours do? On the contrary. The system directly increases interior fervour. It is a well-known psychological fact that however strong an interior emotion is, if you put it into activity, it grows stronger in the very act. A hammer wielded in empty air makes little noise, but bring it down on stone or metal, and you have noise and heat. An anger that smoulders in the mind glows red if you strike the man you are angry with. And so the interior virtues of love, worship, faith, sorrow, lowliness, never burn so intensely as when some sacramental duty is to be performed. Which of us feels sorrow for sin so bitterly as at the moment we have nerved ourselves to seek our confessor and implore absolution? Whose love of Jesus ever burns so brightly as at the moment he comes to partake of His sacred flesh in the Holy Communion? To receive a Sacrament is like sitting at the feet of our Lord, looking in His face, touching the hem of His garment. The interior feelings, which before remained shut up in the inmost citadel of our intellectual nature, spread forth upon our whole heart and being, and seize all the points of action and the gates of emotion; and we are transformed from merely decorous Christians to lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ. Would that men understood this! The Sacraments, then, are symbolical rites, signifying grace and conferring it. They are ordained by Jesus Christ. They have their efficacy from His blood. May He give all here light and grace to partake of them

CHRIST AND THE SINNER.

Ascending on high He led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men.

EPH. iv. 8.

THE question of how we are to be justified is the most momentous question we can ask. It is none the less serious because so many men disregard it, and so many even deny that it is a question at all. The denial of the existence of grace and of the fact of regeneration is becoming more and more common in this country. You cannot engage in a friendly argument with a chance acquaintance without running the risk of finding that the world of the spirit is an unknown world to him; that he does not admit the invisible and the supernatural, except, perhaps, so far as to hold that there is a being whom men call God; that the whole line of argument which starts with the truth that the human soul stands in need of a sanctification over and above its mere nature, is out of the horizon of his ordinary thought. Men engaged all day and every day in busy work, in exciting occupation, diversified by social enjoyment and such pleasure and amusement as they have time for, are naturally strangers to the things of faith. 'The animal man,' says St. Paul—that is, the man who lives a merely natural human life—'perceiveth not the things that are of the Spirit of God, for it is foolishness to him, and he

cannot understand.'¹ This is to be expected. It is difficult for any man to enter into an art or a business which he has not cultivated. If a business man, for instance, understands poetry or painting, or if a professional man has a cultivated appreciation of languages, of music, or of some art that is not his own, he knows that he has had to get it by years of patient training and observation. It is no wonder, then, that so many men, having the worldly bias they have, do not appreciate the inner life of the spirit. And what they cannot understand they find it convenient to deny.

But as long as we admit the existence of an omnipotent God, and of a spirit in man made to God's image and destined to know and cling to Him, we cannot deny that we have another life besides the life we live by our bodily sense and natural reason. The loftiness of man's nature and its grand aspirations and possibilities prove what its end and object must be ; whilst its littleness, its subjection to the flesh, its dependence on the visible and the sensible, show that there is disorder somewhere. Therefore the human heart, whose first want is to be able to cling to its God, must be purified, elevated, and strengthened. The Christian revelation, of original sin, natural corruption, redemption through Christ and strength in His precious blood, is the only key that will fit this difficult lock. It is the only hypothesis which consistently explains everything. And it is only with extreme peril that any man or woman can reject the teachings of revelation about justification and grace. A man may feel no want of grace, and see no outward

¹ 1 Cor. ii. 14.

difference between the sinner and the saint ; he may be unconscious of higher aspirations and contented to live for a thousand years, if he might, in a world which he by no means dislikes ; but he carries about in his very bosom what he cannot get rid of. His heart was made for God, and God it must have. Blindfolded, cheated, and besotted as it may be for a few years, a dissolution will come ; earthly elements will go asunder under the touch of death, and the immaterial imperishable spirit, left alone, the mist cleared away, and the veil drawn aside, will know its last end and see the Being for whom it was made. And unless it is holy, it must be dragged from His face for ever.

God might have justified us without the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ ; but for the beauty of justice and the example of all ages He has willed the present glorious dispensation. The merits of our Saviour are the treasures of the world's holiness and grace. The application of those merits to the soul of each man and woman is the very end and object of the Christian religion. It was for this that prophecies were made and promises given ; it was for this that types were instituted and figures foreshadowed good things to come. It was for this that God thundered from Sinai, that Moses gave his law, David chanted immortal prayers, and Isaias wrote his song in ecstatic visions. It was for this that Jesus sent forth ministers and promised to abide with them ; it was for this that, before He went up on high, He gave these gifts to men which were to convey to them, every one, the bounty which His sacred hands and precious words dispensed as long as He was

visibly in the flesh. This instruction concerns the method of our justification.

We obtain grace and even possibly justification, as I have said, not only by the Sacraments, but also by prayer. But the Sacraments, which also include prayer, are the ordinary means of justification and salvation. And, therefore, it is useful to explain more precisely the mode in which we receive grace from the Sacraments, especially from those Sacraments by which we pass from the state of sin to the state of justification. To many the great stumbling-block to belief in the Sacrament of Penance, for instance, is their persuasion that Scripture teaches that we are justified by Faith. They have been brought up to hear this said, and to believe it. They have been accustomed to hear that any other doctrine destroys the infinite merits of Christ. Now I believe that with most people in these days there is a confusion of thought here which may be easily removed. The Catholic Church professes the doctrine of Justification by Faith, but *not by Faith alone*. Faith, in the case of grown-up persons, is a condition and also a cause of justification. There are various classes of cause. There is the cause primary and the cause secondary, partial cause and total cause, subjective cause and objective cause. Faith, understood in its true and scriptural sense, is a true cause of justification. The word Faith is sometimes strangely abused. Luther first, and Calvin more elaborately afterwards, taught that Faith was a confidence that Christ had died specially for you, that you were predestinated and your sins forgiven. The foundation of this pestilential

teaching is that Christ died only for the elect; whereas He died for all. Faith, thus understood, has no other reasonable motive or proof than interior persuasion, which may as easily as not be mere feeling, enthusiasm, or sentiment; and its consequences are a freedom from all law, and liberty to sin freely. I wonder how reasonable men could ever pervert a scripture term so widely. There is literally not a single text in which the precept 'Believe' means 'Believe you are justified.' Surely the wildest advocate of infallibility never reached such a depth of unreason as to insist on a man's believing himself to be what is not only not proved, but from the very nature of the case, totally incapable of proof.

1.—Faith, in the New Testament, is not a confidence about your own state, but a belief in something external to yourself. It has, doubtless, more than one shade of signification. In the Gospels it most frequently means a believing trust in our Lord's power, holiness, or Divinity. 'Can'st thou believe?' said our Lord to those who asked Him for help. When Jesus Christ had departed from the earth, and had left His revelation in His place, the word Faith took in not only His own sacred Person, but His whole teaching. Instead of denoting a single act and a simple look of trust, it came to signify a permanent spiritual state, and a widely-generalised spiritual view. Faith, to those who saw Jesus in the flesh, was the tender confidence of the child, who either has no troubles, or, when he has, looks only into the face of his mother; in those who were gathered to His fold after He was gone, it was like the

grounded and rooted trust of the wife in the love and strength of the husband whom she has learned to know through many chequered years. The well-known definition in the first verse of Heb. xi. ought to leave no doubt in any one's mind as to what is meant by Christian Faith. It is an 'argument' or proof—that is, an intellectual and spiritual view—of things that the senses do not see. It is the 'substance' or subsistence, as far as possible, of the things we look forward to. It presents us with the unseen; it puts the future into our hands. You see that Faith means a belief in something external to ourselves. Such is the description of that Faith which plays a part in Justification. Look, for example, at Romans x. 8, 9, where St. Paul mentions as a condition of salvation the belief and profession of the Incarnation—the 'Word which we preach.' And in Hebrews xi. 6, he says that all who 'approach God' to be saved must 'believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those who seek Him.'

2.—But, secondly, Faith even thus understood, is not the only factor in Justification. It is perfectly evident from Holy Scripture that at least five other acts are required on the part of a grown-up person. These are—Fear of God, Hope, Love, Contrition, and the purpose of keeping God's Commandments. Faith, entering the mind like a ray of heavenly light, makes the heart realise at once the terror of God's justice and the kindness of His mercy; and then spring up Fear and Hope. 'The beginning of wisdom' (that is, of Justification) 'is the Fear of the Lord.'^a 'We are saved by Hope.'

^a Romans viii. 24.

Divine Hope, like an angel sent down from heaven to raise our hearts to what is prepared for us there, points to God and His personal love, which thereupon begins to spring in our hearts. Then our sinfulness becomes loathsome to us, and we are pierced with sorrow, and in accents of contrition we utter promises to keep for the future those commandments we have too disgracefully transgressed. 'Repent,' said our Lord to those who came to Him seeking life. 'Repent,' cried out St. Peter and all the Apostles, who, after their Lord's example, sought out sinners to save their souls. Thus, even with real Christian faith, many other dispositions are required before the heart is regenerate and sanctified.

3.—You will say: Surely these are dispositions and preparations enough? When a man believes, fears, hopes, loves, and proposes to begin a new life, he must be justified in heart. What can Baptism, or the Sacrament of Penance, do more for him? In addition, however, to all these dispositions, he must receive one or other of those Sacraments—Baptism if he has not received it, Penance if he has. I do not deny that he may perhaps be justified before he receives the Sacrament; but he must, at least, intend to receive it, and as soon as possible put his intention into practice. But here I must call your attention to a most important remark. As long as these dispositions are not intense, a man, *with all of them existing in his soul, is not yet justified.* Let me remind you that justification is the work of an instant and not a process. It is not like the gradual dawn of day, during which the light increases so imperceptibly that you can tell it is increasing only by comparing

widely distant intervals. It is rather like the sun-rise itself. At one moment, as you gaze across the level waters to the East, no portion of the fiery disk can yet be seen, though the reddening clouds and the growing light herald his coming. Then, in an instant, as you look, the luminary surges above the waves, and reigns in the heavens as yesterday. There is no medium for a man's soul. He is either a sinner, or just. He is either the object of God's wrath, or of His gracious pleasure. He is worthy either of hell-fire, or of Heaven. He deserves either the company of the demons, or the bliss of the beatific vision. Not but that there are degrees of guilt, even in deadly sin ; and there are degrees of justice and holiness in the regenerate ; and a man who dies just may still have imperfections to cleanse away. But the sinner, if he is a sinner by one deadly sin, is hateful to God ; the just, however many lesser stains and blemishes may be upon him, is substantially the friend of God ; and if he dies so, he is perfectly secure of the bliss of the heavens, even though he must pass through the purifying fires of purgatory first. So that his justification is instantaneous and complete. Now the dispositions which I have described need not by any means go so far as that complete turning of the heart to God which alone can justify without the Sacraments. They do not contain among them a perfect act of love, or a perfect act of sorrow ; and nothing else will justify in the absence of the Sacrament. And it is because perfect acts are hard to make that Jesus Christ has left us the Sacraments. Christ supplies, by influence from without, the deficiency of our internal spiritual acts. He thus realises

the prophetic description of Himself; 'Strengthen ye the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees. Say to the faint-hearted, take courage and fear not. . . . God Himself will come and save you.'⁴ 'He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather together the lambs with His arm. It is He that giveth strength to the weary.'⁵ Faith, hope, fear—these are the weak and feeble efforts of man, themselves not without grace; the Good Shepherd supplies the rest. So that faith is really a cause and root of justification; it is the root and beginning of every supernatural process. There is no beginning, or progress, or perfection of supernatural justice in this life, which, on man's side, does not spring from faith as from its root, rest on faith as on its foundation, and which, even on the side of sacramental efficacy, does not suppose faith as a primary condition. St. Augustine says, 'A man is said to be justified by faith and not by works, because faith is the first gift, and faith draws on the rest, that is those works, as they are called, which make up a life of justice.'⁶ It is thus that the doctrine of the Catholic Church reconciles text with text, and allows to faith, to grace and to sacraments their several shares in the justification of the soul of man. To illustrate this—for illustration is here as good as proof—let us take a Sacrament which is much misrepresented and misunderstood by non-Catholics, I mean the Sacrament of Penance. The Sacrament of Penance is a Sacrament with which by the Priest's absolution, joined with contrition, confession and satisfaction, the sins are forgiven which we have

⁴ Isaiah xxxv. 3, 4.

⁵ Ib. xl. 11, 29.

⁶ St. Augustine on Predestination, chap. vii. par. 12.

committed after Baptism. Penance is the Sacrament of the sinful multitude. When baptismal innocence has been forfeited by wilful deadly sin, there is no hope for the sinner except from the Sacrament of Penance. There are very few, therefore, who do not need this Sacrament. For ourselves, my brethren, we know well how absolutely needful some means is to take away the sins we have committed since Baptism and to reconcile us once more to God. Let us take a man of middle age, who has lived a careless and God-forgetting life. In his childhood he was taught to know God and to raise his heart to God in prayer. When he found himself free from the yoke of teaching and obedience, he looked round on the world to make it as pleasant to himself as he could. He looked for money ; he learnt to strive and to slave for money, perhaps. And he looked for pleasure. He felt the stirring of desires and inclinations, and he was not scrupulous in giving in to them. He led a free life , a life of hard but not unpleasant work, mingled with all the enjoyment he could get. He forgot his God. He became unconscious he had a soul. And now the prayers of his youth have faded out of his memory, as an exile forgets the tongue in which he was born. Over and over again he has deliberately broken the commandments, either in personal sin, in dealings with his fellow-men, or in utter neglect of the worship of God. The true description of his soul is that it is black, odious and hideous in the sight of God. Ezechiel described it when he wrote the account⁷ of the abominations which he saw when he looked through the secret door into

⁷ Ezech. viii. 10.

the temple upon the hidden sins of the people of Israel. He beheld every form of creeping things, and living creatures, the abomination and all the idols of the children of Israel'; and the sinners were crying out. 'The Lord seeth us not, the Lord hath forsaken the earth.' So disgraced, so disfigured and degraded are the souls of thousands who pass for respectable men. In their mature age and their whitening hair, their passions may have died down and the rush of youthful ardour may be past and gone. But the sins of their youth are on their souls; and the sins of their maturity—the sins of God-forgetting, are as deadly in the sight of God as the sins of passion and pleasure. Let us suppose that such a sinner seeks for pardon, reconciliation and justification. If he believes in the Catholic Faith, he knows what to do. He must be sorry; he must discover all his considerable sins to a Priest; he must have a firm resolution to avoid them for the time to come, with God's help; the Priest absolves him, and he rises up a reconciled soul. It will be well to note here the principal facts. 1.—The Sacrament of Penance is not a mechanical appliance to which you go for forgiveness as you would go to a tradesman or a mechanic for food or for furniture. It requires stringent preparation on the part of the applicant, and many spiritual acts—sorrow, examination, humiliation, purpose of amendment. But observe its extreme importance. The Catholic teaching is that the generality of men, even when they turn away from sin, with some love of God, are too weak in their dispositions to be justified; and yet the Sacrament, supervening upon even these poor dispositions, justifies.

Here is the beauty of the New Law. Justification is not merely for the strong and the fervent, but for the weak, the feeble, the lukewarm, and the frail. Not for the impenitent! No, certainly not. The strayed sheep must not resist; but if it will only resign itself with a little sorrow and a little love to its Saviour, He will take it on His own shoulders and carry it home. 2.—The Priest does not really stand between you and God. If your sorrow and your love are sufficiently powerful, you are justified before the Sacrament, though you must still go to confession for obedience' sake; but if your dispositions are not powerful enough to justify you, this outward rite comes to your assistance, and so far from interfering with Grace it brings it down upon you when otherwise you would have been without it. And all that the Priest does he does by the power of Christ and in His name. Whose sins he shall forgive they are forgiven. 3.—Faith is absolutely necessary in the Sacrament of Penance—faith in God, in the Holy Trinity, in Jesus Christ, and in His whole Revelation. But faith does not of itself suffice. 4.—Look at the profound wisdom of the institution as a whole. What are our chief difficulties after we have once conceived the desire to turn to God? God's help being supposed, there are three difficulties about our interior spiritual activity, the difficulty of certainty or definiteness, the difficulty of warmth or fervour, and the difficulty of strength. The Sacrament of Penance meets all these. First, as to definiteness in our interior acts. The sinner who begins to turn to God experiences a great deal of that condition of will which the wise man describes—'he willeth and

he willeth not.' At times he would be virtuous, abandon his sin, and turn to God. But he finds it difficult to bring matters to the point. His best thoughts wander; he is like a man in a mist, he has no definite idea where he is. His past life is blurred and blotted, he is tempted to let it pass. And the consequence is that most men, even with good desires, let the past alone, and content themselves with an indefinite idea they will be better for the future. Now the practice of the Sacrament of Penance makes this impossible. The penitent has to examine his past life, not with foolish or nervous solicitude, but with fair exactness; he has to get a sort of catalogue of his doings before his eyes. This not only impresses him with a true idea of his sinfulness, but it shows him what to do for the future, and, what is more than all, it makes him, on a certain day and hour, lay his sins as in a bundle at the feet of his Saviour's Cross, and there and then work up his heart by prayerful meditation to detest them utterly, and to resolve on a new life for the future. Thus he becomes *sure* of his interior disposition. In the same way he becomes earnest or intense. Self-examination, definiteness of place and time, the humbling of ourselves before a fellow-man like our confessor—all this makes us earnest. These things rouse resistance too thoroughly in our lower nature not to make us very intense and determined. Just as a man never knows he has evil passions till some one crosses him, so the practice of the Sacrament of Penance, like a cross placed on us by Christ Jesus, intensifies our interior acts, and so increases our merit. And, lastly, the Sacrament helps our weak-

ness. For it is intended to give a special strength to our resolutions of amendment. Over and above the justification which the words of absolution bring, they convey also the special sacramental grace of perseverance in well-doing. My brethren, this is the Catholic teaching and practice. We maintain that such is the true interpretation of the Scripture. We have all antiquity at our back. This is a most weighty consideration. The question is, What did Jesus Christ intend? Nothing can tell us so well as the proof of uninterrupted practice. There have been Christians and Christian practice ever since our Lord departed. From the moment when Peter and the eleven turned away with sad hearts from the spot on Olivet where they saw Him for the last time, to this moment in which a certain number of Christian hearts are thinking of Him and His teachings in this place, there is an unbroken chain of men who have called themselves believers. There must be a tradition on the subject of the Sacraments, and if there is a tradition we should give it very great weight. I am not speaking of the authority of the Church's teaching. I am referring only to that purely historical evidence which is derived from the immemorial theory and practice of a perpetually-renewed corporate body. And it is to be remembered that the question of sacramental efficacy which we are now discussing, is from its very nature a matter in which Christians of all ages must have held decided views. The Sacraments are either absolutely necessary for spiritual welfare, or they are perfectly optional and comparatively unimportant. A Christian

inquirer, therefore, who finds himself, in this latter half of the nineteenth century of our Lord's era, anxious to know what Jesus Christ intended the Sacraments to be and to effect, cannot do better than inquire what the stream of Christians of all times have thought about it. There is no doubt that those whom our Lord instructed concerning the kingdom of God during the forty days of His glorified life, must have known what He meant. The Apostles must have known what ensued when they baptized and imposed hands. The men whom they sent forth to carry on their teaching must have known what the Apostles taught. The pupils whom these instructed must have learnt the lesson as well. And the knowledge cannot easily have died out. In a few generations there were too many Christian centres in the world for anything which Christ had taught to be utterly lost and forgotten. If one great Church or See had disputed, ignored or denied any truth such as this, a rival Church and See would have always spoken, and cried out innovation. The teaching of the Christian past, therefore, in the Sacraments cannot be disregarded. If a man takes his Bible, and having withdrawn himself beyond all advice or assistance to study it, comes back and says he has found out the truth on a point like this, the probability will be that his opinion is worthless. I must briefly point out what it is that the past tells us. If I divide the eighteen centuries of Christian history into two unequal parts at a point about three hundred years ago, I obtain a most remarkable result. During the fifteen hundred years that make the first division, I find that the sense of Christian people is perfectly

unanimous as to the real efficacy of the Sacraments. Not only do we find writers, century after century, expressing without hesitation this view, but there is positively no sign that anyone thought differently. I am aware that, if you look very narrowly into some of the dark corners of Church history, you do light upon a name, once and again, of some one who denied there were any Sacraments at all, or of those who denied that certain of the Sacraments are truly Sacraments. But the name or names, were I to mention them, would sound ridiculously unknown to my hearers. They are names which never divided the world, as Arius or Pelagius did. The phalanx of the Fathers, the army of historians, the saints, the bishops, the doctors, all through the fifteen hundred years, as far as they speak at all, are simply unanimous in holding that what Christ taught was that the sacramental actions are interiorly efficacious. I do not know whether it is worth while to quote testimonies; but I give one or two as specimens. It will not be disputed that this was the faith of the Church—that is, of all Churchmen—for at least the three hundred years immediately before the Reformation. We need only take up such a book as the *Theological Summa* of St. Thomas of Aquin to see this. This was a book which during those three hundred years every teacher and scholar in Divinity read, commented, discoursed, and criticised. But the most utter of its opponents never opposed it in regard to its teaching on the efficacy of the Sacraments. St. Thomas wrote exactly three hundred years before the date of the Augsburg Confession. Only a few years

after he wrote, a great Council of the English Church was held at London, in the Cathedral Church of St. Paul. Among the many decrees which were made in that Council for the good of religion, there is one—it is the second in the printed edition⁸—which is entitled *De Sacramentis*. It opens with this short preamble :—‘The Sacraments are, as it were, the heavenly vessels in which are contained the remedies of salvation.’ There is no mistaking what the Bishops of England thought in that day about the Sacraments. Such instances as this—the one from a universal text-book, the other from a national Church Council, prove perfectly and completely what was the universal belief of the time. And if from the middle ages we pass to the epoch of the great Christian Fathers and Doctors, we hardly know where to pick out a witness. Shall it be Chrysostom at Constantinople; or Augustine in Africa; or Ambrose at Milan? Shall it be the Councils of the East or of the West? Shall we invoke Tertullian the Latin, or Origen the Greek? Their words are written in books; you may read them there. Within the last year or two a great British publishing firm has been bringing out an excellent and faithful English translation of the works of St. Augustine (among other translations). St. Augustine wrote a series of Homilies on St. John’s Gospel. Let any hearer read for a few pages almost anywhere in that book, and he will be almost certain to light upon some sentence like the following celebrated one—‘Where does water get this power from, to touch the body and cleanse the heart?’⁹ It is nearly

⁸ Harduin, Tom. vii. 293.

⁹ Tract in Joan, 80.

a reproduction of an oft-repeated axiom of an earlier Father; it is like Tertullian's formula—'The flesh is washed, and the soul is purified; the flesh is anointed, the soul is consecrated; the flesh is marked with a sign, the soul is protected; the flesh is overshadowed by the imposition of hands, the soul is illuminated by the spirit.'¹⁰ This witness wrote less than two hundred years after our Lord's Ascension, and no one contradicted him for 1200 years. To come back to the dividing line between the two periods of which I spoke. It is difficult to know how to characterise the period of what is called the Reformation. As in earlier ages there are names, and writers, and disputants. But they do not agree, even on essential matters of Faith and practice. And, what makes them more difficult still to describe, they not only disagree with each other, but each one is inconsistent with himself. It is really impossible to say what Luther, or Calvin, or Zwingli meant to say about the Sacraments. But this much is certain. None of them agreed with the generations which had gone before on the number of the Sacraments. And they all denied real sacramental efficacy. Luther, by degrees, arrived at his doctrine of salvation by Faith alone. In his gradual progress to this point, ancient beliefs were swept aside and crushed. There is no need to point out that it makes the Sacraments no Sacraments, but only means for exciting devotion. The forms of the Sacraments were only exhortations; they wrought nothing by their own power through Christ. The spirit was everything; the outward act nothing. Luther, to whom I

¹⁰ Tertull. de Resurrect. carn. 8.

refer as the type of Protestantism, or rather Luther's doctrine, met with two significant rebuffs. The first was from those who carried it too far. The Anabaptists utterly rejected every outward form, rite, or observance. They abolished even preaching. And Luther said some of his most savage words against the Anabaptists, who were thought by most people to be merely showing the lawful out-come of Luther's own principles. His other rebuke came from a different quarter. I have already alluded to a celebrated document called the Augsburg Confession. It was a paper drawn up by the Lutheran party at Augsburg in 1530. The first clauses stated that there were three Sacraments—Baptism, Holy Eucharist, and Penance. The Confession was drawn up as a defiance of the Pope and the Catholics. But it was thought that, for that very reason, it would find favour with the schismatical Greek Church. It was accordingly sent to Constantinople and submitted to the Patriarch. This was in 1575. Luther had been dead thirty years; but the theologians of his own town of Wittenberg had sent this embassy to the Patriarch. They received their reply. 'The Catholic Church and the Greek,' said the Patriarch Jeremy, '*teach seven Sacraments*,' and he named the seven, as a Catholic child in this Church would name them. 'These,' he concluded, 'are the Sacraments of God's Church, handed down by tradition both as to their number and as to their substance.' It is exactly three hundred years from this present year that this answer was given. The Greek Patriarch had no love for the Church of Rome. It is not too much to say that he would have had a great temptation to stretch a point in

favour of Rome's enemies. We may conclude from this what a weight of censure is implied in his answer to the Lutheran deputation. It is not merely that he differs from them. He points solemnly to the long line of saints, pastors, and doctors, and the uninterrupted popular belief, which constitute Christian tradition; and he tells them they are innovators. Right or wrong, they do not take Christ's words in the sense in which the whole Church of every age has agreed to take them. And therefore he must hold them as strangers and heretics.

THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.

And it came to pass after the Angel departed from them into Heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word which is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us. LUKE ii. 15.

WHAT the shepherds went over to Bethlehem to see was the greatest event which had ever happened in the world up to that time. In a cave on the hill-side on which rose the cottages which made up the village of Bethlehem an infant was lying on straw. As the shepherds went 'with haste' from the place where they were keeping the night watches over their flocks to the neighbourhood of the little town, no one seemed to be aware that anything very unusual was taking place. The Bethlehemites were occupied with a public matter that was happening at the time—the enrolment for the census. The public caravanserai was crowded, and there were numbers of strangers in the place, who went where they could. There was some little excitement even during the hours of the night; there was suffering and privation, and perhaps there was feasting and hospitality among the few who were better off. But the presence of Mary, of Joseph, and of the infant Jesus was only the presence of one poor family the more. It was regarded as much—and as little. Yet this was a fact more stupendous than

the Deluge, or the passage of Israel out of Egypt. This was an hour more full of fate to the world than the hour when the commandments were given amid the thunders of Sinai. Why were not the flood-gates opened? Why did not the fire flash in the sky and the terrifying thunder roll from horizon to horizon? Why did not God, the Maker, the Ruler, speak with some awful voice and warn the careless world of what was coming to pass?

God did speak. Heaven was opened. No storm gathered, no fires darted to the earth. The sky was bright, as it only is in those Eastern climes. The thousand stars shone out, lifting up the eye and the thought to infinite space in unknown depths. They shone on the fields where David had wandered, where Booz had been master, where Ruth had gleaned. There were others watching in those fields that night, and it was to them that God spoke. The Angel on a sudden stood near them on the plain, as once an angel had stood beside Abraham, and Jacob, and Gedeon. The brightness of his garment of glory radiated around him, making startling splendour in the dim midnight. It was to them—to those poor, unconsidered men—that the message from Heaven was sent, and the great fact of all time announced. God seemed to hold His hand, and to keep His thunders hushed. Only for a moment do we catch a glimpse of the awfulness and majesty of what was happening, when suddenly a thousand angels join their brother and sing, 'Glory in the highest,' and disappear—like the wing of a mighty host which is sweeping with banner and triumphant chant past the confines of the earth in the joy and glory of that blessed

night—and then the song ceases high up in the heavens, the light fades out, and the stars shine quietly again. But the shepherds have heard. And they hasten to Bethlehem to look upon the 'Word' which had been announced to them.

It needs the contrast between the lowliness and obscurity of the first Christmas and the mightiness of the change which it has wrought in the world to enable us to read its lessons aright. The great temptation to the world has always been to look for the grandest results from merely natural causes. Physical power produces physical consequences, and moral qualities moral effects. Nature works by her own laws, and human nature, left to itself, follows the law of human nature. But there are higher effects and greater facts than either physical or moral ones. There is a spiritual order; and even if that spiritual order rests on nature's laws and partly follows them, yet it includes a whole world which mere nature cannot touch. And the temptation is to reckon spiritual results by physical and moral causes; in other words, to judge of the influence of a fact on the supreme spiritual order by the size of the fact, measured by its visible or moral attributes. The generations, like the one our Saviour addressed, are always 'seeking for a sign.' They look round about for something that will dazzle or awe them; and as soon as they see it, they are ready to exclaim: 'Here is the engine that will turn the world round!' Kings, conquerors, sages, discoveries, books—all these have been hailed in turn as 'signs.' But the generations have been always mistaken. The only 'sign' that has been worth considering has been the

sign of Jonas the Prophet; when there has been a disappearance, a burial, a dying, a failure. This is the only 'sign' that has been followed by a mighty resurrection. The Incarnation—the stable at Bethlehem—betrays the secret of God's ways of working. He works by paradoxes, and by failures. He works by what the world pronounces impossibilities, and by what the world judges to be absurd and inadequate means. He designs instruments which baffle natural reason, and combines things which the common sense (as it is called) of men pronounces to be incompatible. You cannot understand creation itself. A creature, whether it be a seraph or a grain of dust, demands infinite power and infinite wisdom; and how the Infinite could act with a finite result is beyond our explanation. How creatures could come into existence and yet God be no better off and no different; what sufficient motive could induce the Divine mind to create at all; how the Hand of the Infinite holds up the universe, and yet the universe is not the Infinite: all these questions are incapable of full explanation. We know them as facts, but they seem to be paradoxes. Only, they are paradoxes which we must entertain, or else the great and most real paradox lies in wait for us—the denial of the existence of God.

Consider, again, man's own nature. He is made up of body and spirit; of body which seems only a varying group of earthly elements, and of spirit which soars to abstract truth; of senses which thrill with colours and sounds, with gross contacts and nerve-currents, and of soul which can control, neglect, direct, and rise above all these. He is base and splendid, perishable and

immortal, material and spiritual, aspiring to good yet a prey to evil. If it were possible to do it, men would deny such a thing as human nature. They would say, 'It is impossible. You cannot join a body and a spirit thus together.'

And coming to the Incarnation, we light upon another Divine paradox. Who could have thought it possible that the Eternal Word should be made Flesh, and dwell amongst us? The power of God can easily use men, and all creatures, as its instruments; speak by their mouths, guide their hands, inspire them with any thoughts or designs. But how could poor finite humanity and the immensity of the Deity be joined together so that but one Person should result?—how could the everlasting be in time?—the Infinite be a little child?—the immortal King die upon a Cross? Yet these three things—the fact of creation, the nature of man, and the Incarnation—are the groundwork of all religion and worship. Move one of these foundation-stones from its place and the ruins bury you.

When we go on to speak of God's way of working by what seem to be 'failures,' we speak chiefly of His workings in the supernatural order. Yet in this regard, even creation itself teaches a lesson. Nature's laws are assuredly no failures. They are certain, inexorable, infallible. Yet we may observe how silent they are, how unobtrusive, how apparently yielding. The glories of the forest, and the autumn harvests of fruit and flowers were once little seeds which men buried in the soil; and dark days came, with chilling rain and blustering winds, during which the seeds lay rotting

and forgotten. But they sprung up irresistibly when the hour came. Man battles with nature, with climate, with soil, with noxious influences. As he advances, armed with his science, nature seems to yield and consent to compromise. But man sleeps, hesitates, neglects, dies, and nature comes on again and calmly rules, as the ocean breaks down sooner or later the sea walls which man forgets but for a winter to watch and care for. Man himself is an example of the weak thing beating down the strong. Man, naked, defenceless, keenly sensitive, with no strong instincts like the brutes, yet lives and gathers treasure and rules the earth and the things that are therein. So sure it is that apparent weakness, obscurity, silence and non-resistance mark the very strongest powers of which we have any knowledge.

But there are some forces which lie deeper down than others. And it is these which make the least show upon the surface. Our Lord Jesus Christ was to regenerate and to rule, not the physical universe, but the world of man's soul. And Jesus Christ came in weakness and in failure—as it appeared. Weak enough He seemed in all truth, on that night when the shepherds went up to look for Him. A little new-born Babe, without speech, or use of limb, or seeming consciousness. A cradle of a beast's manger, in the hole of the hill-side which the beast shared with Him. A mother, who was a poor maiden from an obscure village, and at that moment away even from her poor home. A foster father who worked at a lowly trade, unknown not only to the rulers of the Empire, to the governor of the

province, to the Jewish priests, to the nation of the Jewish people, but even to the very peasants who slept or talked a few dozen yards from his rude shelter. Attended by a half-dozen shepherd people, unlettered and simple, wondering with all their might. Heralded by angels, but proclaimed only in the solitary fields, where only a few peasants heard the message. Who could know Him? Who could see in Him as He lies there the Eternal Word of God, the brightness of eternal light, the unspotted mirror of God's majesty? Instead of immensity, terror, and overpowering glory, there is littleness, innocent feebleness, infancy. He speaks not. He does not proclaim Himself, He seems purposely hidden away, He is lifted in others' hands and makes no resistance. There is coming in and going out, and He does not notice. There is talking and discussing, and He seems not to hear. Think of this, and think that this is purposely done and contrived by the infinite wisdom as the very best means of working the salvation of men. And think that power not only lurks there hidden under these weak surroundings. Power is actually generated by and through them. It is the nature of that kind of power to exist so and to work so. Partly because God wishes His own special work to be quite distinct from human work; partly because the spiritual insight which brings men to see and feel the Almighty present under the outward semblance of a little child, is the most precious of all gifts. And, therefore, to show forth His own greatness and glory, and to excite and kindle our faith and the spiritual activity of which faith is the only groundwork, God

humbled Himself, taking the form of a servant, and being formed in the likeness of a man,¹ nay, of a little child, born in a stable, ministered to by Mary ever Virgin, protected by Joseph, watched by humble shepherds, and utterly left alone by all the world beside.

My brethren, Almighty God does not change His ways. Therefore it cannot be a surprise to us if we find that some of His greatest works in the law of grace are still looked upon as paradoxes, and if He still seems to hide Himself when the world is impatient for proof and activity and outward show. There is one matter in which the Incarnation seems to be daily renewed and the circumstances of Bethlehem to occur over and over again. On Christmas Day we are naturally led to think about the Eucharistic presence of Jesus to the end of time. There is no season of the year which seems better to suit the Blessed Sacrament than the season of Christ's birth. That holy Sacrament, it is true, commemorates His passion. Yet the awfulness and the suffering of the Cross, which we have before us at Passiontide, are past for ever. It is true also that the Body which we break is the same Body which is glorious for ever more. Yet the splendours of the resurrection, the glory of the ascension, the triumph of the heavenly courts, are out of our sight in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. But what we see does bring Bethlehem to our minds. He comes upon the altar when the words of might are uttered, as He came once into the world. Our churches are Bethlehem; once more His servants are bidden to seek Him in the place of His rest, the place He hath

¹ Philip. ii. 7.

chosen. 'Behold we have heard of it in Ephrath, we have found it in the fields of the wood.'² Once more it is not in the palaces of kings, in the halls of the noble, or the busy streets that He is to be found. Once more 'faithful people' hasten up like the shepherds of old, passing by the places where the world is merry and occupied, passing through the crowds, deferring the claims of their nearest and dearest. For the message has come to them. The message has not been vouchsafed to many of the great or prominent ones of the world. Jesus in His Eucharistic presence is not recognised or known universally in a country like this. Those who hasten to Him are often the poor and the unlettered. His worshippers come to Him whilst there is darkness and indifference round about. And when they enter the new Bethlehem, or House of Bread, they see Him, not cradled in a manger, but wrapped up under the forms of the sacramental species. They look upon the appearance of bread and of wine, which hide Him as the swathing bands of old. He lies there as silent, as apparently unconscious, as passive and as meek as He lay in His mother's lap on the first Christmas Day. He is moved this way and that, and He does not heed; He is adored, and takes no notice; He is, perchance, dishonoured, and He does not seem to know. His servants try to show Him reverence. They cannot emulate the love and purity of Mary or of Joseph. But they try to give Him honour outward and inward. Outwardly, the churches and the altars manifest their care and love.

² Psalms cxxxi. 6.

Pure white linen, lights, and flowers symbolise their reverence. Sacred vestures, mystic ceremonies, reverent rites which have grown up during the whole of the Christian centuries, and most of which are full of historic significance, have succeeded to the simple ritual of the stable. Yet they feel that, do what they may, Jesus is born in a stable still. They feel that the costliest temples which can be built on this earth are but as the dwellings of beasts in comparison with His greatness. They know that the best gold, the most gorgeous vestments, the most beautiful ornaments, the rarest flowers, all the brilliancy that kings or nations can command, are very little to Him. None are more conscious than themselves that the most splendid ceremonial is poor and mean compared with what He deserves. And it is one of the touching features of the Blessed Sacrament, just as we are touched in the narrative of Bethlehem by the simple statement of the poverty and humbleness of His birth, that we find Him contented to put up with human ministrations, with poor earthly preparations, nay, often with real poverty and misery in the surroundings to which He condescends when He comes amongst us. It is this lowliness, this meekness and silent helplessness, which appeal to our hearts. It is this simplicity, this trusting of Himself in our hands that overcome our indifference and our coldness. It is this undeniable proof that He is here for us and for our salvation, and because He indeed loves us, that captivates all our affection and makes our love overflow.

It is a sad truth, which interferes with the fulness of our joy even on a festival like this, that so many of those

around us cannot find all this in the Blessed Sacrament. We ought to know that, as long as world lasts, something like this must be. There are one or two unbelieving questions recorded in the Gospels which remain the type of many questions which will be asked to the world's end. In earlier times the favoured Hebrew could not see how it was possible for God to save His people by means of a desert and a wandering. 'Can God prepare a table in the wilderness?' they said. 'How can this man give us His Flesh to eat?' was the counterpart of the question, when a greater than Moses promised them the true Manna from Heaven. 'Can a man forgive sins?' 'Can He have God for His Father?' 'Is not this the carpenter's son?'—this kind of question is what the world is asking now, as the Jews asked of old. How can Jesus Christ be present under the form of bread?—this is what so many ask in our days. We can picture to ourselves some moderately instructed Hebrew being taken to the Stable at Bethlehem whilst the Child was still there, and told that this was the Saviour of the world and the Word made Flesh. Probably he would not have been able to accept it. He would have said, 'How can God become man? How can the Infinite become a little child? How can a child without speech save the whole world and open the gates of Heaven?'

It is obvious that this is a dangerous style of question. So many things can be done which cannot be understood by human intelligence that it is not safe to commit ourselves to assertions of impossibility. When matters of fact are visible to the eye, or matters of testimony are

proved beyond reasonable doubt, it should require a very strong feeling of our own competency to make us venture to say the thing is impossible. The Catholic doctrine, supported by Scripture and demonstrated by the tradition of every age, is that the bread becomes Christ's Body, and therefore Christ Himself. How can anyone dare to say this is impossible? The difficulty, I need not say, is to conceive how a human body, with its tissues and bones, can be really present within the narrow circle of the Host. But suppose that material substance is only force, and that neither shape, nor dimension, nor outward contact is necessary to its existence—then the difficulty vanishes. No doubt, material substance in its usual and natural condition subsists with dimension and contact; just as the waters of the Jordan rolled on continually to the sea of the desert until that moment when they were arrested and stood still at the passage of the Ark. God commands material substance as He commands every created thing. And we have a decisive Scriptural instance which proves that the very thing which Catholic Faith demands in the Eucharist has occurred outside of the Eucharist and is accepted by all believers in the Bible. On the very day of our Lord's resurrection, He stood suddenly in the room in which His disciples were assembled 'and the doors were shut.'³ His body after his resurrection was a true and real Body. He takes special pains to make this clear to the wondering and doubting disciples. 'See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle and see: for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as you see Me to have.'⁴ Therefore this time the

³ John xx. 19.

⁴ Luke xxiv. 39.

human body of Jesus passed through walls or closed doors ; and to have done so it must have been, for the instant at least, without dimension, shape, or external contact. Every one of us believes this, for otherwise the incident is simply inexplicable, being either false or absurd. But what has been may be again. And the Body of our Lord may exist in the Eucharist in this respect like it existed when it passed through material substance on the evening of the Resurrection. And the Catholic doctrine is no paradox, though it may seem so. Neither is our doctrine a paradox on another head. We often hear it said that the doctrine of the Real Presence contradicts the testimony of the senses. Bread we see, bread we taste, therefore bread it is and remains. I cannot imagine a man who believes in the Bible, and in the power of God to work miracles, making this objection in good faith. An Infidel—a man who has thrown inspiration overboard, and discarded revelation and the supernatural—might consistently make it, and would have to be answered ; but such a man would attack the Incarnation itself in the same breath. But a Christian cannot argue thus, on full reflection. Our senses are under Almighty God's overruling control, just like the air and the waters, the forces of the earth and of the sky. What is seeing or tasting ? It is a physical change or immutation of a certain sense or organ, causing that vital reaction of the soul which we call 'knowing.' Such immutation of the organ ordinarily proceeds from the influence of an external object, or is the lingering effect of a past sensation. But it is in God's power to have it otherwise. He can make us

see appearances when there is nothing but appearances, as He made Tobias see the body which the Angel Raphael seemed to have, and which the Angel afterwards told Tobias was not a body at all.⁵ He can also make us *not see* a thing when it is truly present, or seem to see appearances in a thing which are quite different from what are really the thing's own appearances. You remember, for instance, how the eyes of the disciples going to Emmaus were 'held' that they should not know our Lord.⁶ They saw Him, talked to Him, and ate with Him; they saw features and heard the accents of a voice; but neither the features nor the voice were those familiar ones they knew so well. It was not that our Lord altered His looks nor the tone of His voice; but their eyes were 'held.' In the Blessed Eucharist there is the appearance of bread when there is no bread, and there is the Body of our Lord without Its appearances. What is there impossible in this? And it is not as if God deceived us. When He interferes with natural law He does so for a serious purpose and at rare intervals. When He 'holds' our senses that we see not the thing really present in the Eucharist, He does so by a rare and most exceptional act, and He gives us the most solemn warnings and assurances that He has done so. And thus the apparent paradox is no paradox at all.

It is true that a great and powerful assistance on the part of the grace of God is necessary before man's mind can believe in the Eucharist. He requires Faith. Faith is a gift of God. It is that supernatural faculty by which we assent to things which we cannot see, and

⁵ Tobias xii. 19.

⁶ Luke xxiv. 16.

assent on God's authority. It is a light of the mind ; but it is more than this. It is an 'obedience,' as St. Paul calls it. In believing, the mind has not so much to struggle against as the heart. The heart is rebellious to authority ; it dislikes submission ; it abhors mystery ; it rejects being treated as a child. All this must be got over, and much more, and divinely-infused faith is the only influence which can conquer here. This is the reason why we must pray for Faith and for increase of Faith. Faith, like an angel from Heaven, stands beside us as we watch upon earth, in the dimness of night. Its brightness shines round about, and we hear the message which sends us to Bethlehem. And it is when we have found Jesus that we recognise the reason why He comes so really, so familiarly, and so humble. The reason is, that He wants to take possession of our affections. This is the reason of the Incarnation, with all its touching circumstances ; and this is the reason of the Eucharist. The peculiar grace of the Eucharist, following its reception, is ardent devotion. It is a grace few people believe in. Real affection for Jesus Christ is not common now, especially outside the Catholic Church. Indeed, I am not sure but that many non-Catholics would object to it on principle, as making religion too much an affair of sentiment. But the commandment is that we love God with our 'whole heart.' Some can give God their 'mind,' and even their 'strength,' but not their heart. Yet if we have not given our heart we are either not His, or very precariously His. Everyone understands the difference between cold approval of a thing or a person, and warm

enthusiastic affection. The difference is like that between the cold, wan sunlight of a December noon-day hour, and the burning, all-day long heat of July. When we devoutly and affectionately love, our love does not lie shut up in the depth of our spirit, but spreads over imagination and fancy, heart and nerve, through all the reaches of our being. We have pictures of Jesus in our thoughts, presenting themselves unsought for. We have Him before our eyes as He lay a babe upon His mother's knee, as He stood in the Temple hearing the doctors, as He taught, as He suffered. Our love is thus made deep, and wide, and tender. His name raises a thousand associations, like the miniature of a dear departed face, or some relic which reminds us of youth, or home, or days of happiness long past. Religious emotion is not the essence of religion ; religion lies deeper ; but emotion and feeling make religion more thorough, more sure, and more easy. A man may be alive when his face is pale, his limbs cold and stiff, and his pulse almost gone ; but he is safer and better when there is colour in his cheeks and warmth through all his limbs. But men and women seem to reserve all their tenderness now for one another—for child, or wife, or husband. They accept God, but hardly love Him ; and so the Rationalists come and tell them God is not a person at all, but an abstract thing, a law, a principle. Against this fatal teaching God came in the Flesh ; God remains in the Eucharist. The Eucharist is the carrying out of the principles of the Incarnation. But there were few who found Him at Bethlehem ; and so there are few who truly find Him in the Eucharist. If any here are

anxious to find Him, let them be aware that the dispositions which lead to Him are lowly and filial devotion to God, the earnest desire to save our immortal soul, the avoiding personal sin, and earnest, never-failing prayer.

THE GRAND CHRISTIAN LITURGICAL ACT.

Jesus Christ, offering one Sacrifice for our sins, for ever sitteth on the right hand of God. HEB. x. 12.

I PURPOSE to speak to-night, and on next Sunday night (by God's help), on a subject which can never be sufficiently enforced or explained—I mean the holy Sacrifice of the Mass. To Catholics, the Mass is the centre of all their worship, their devotion, and their spiritual life. As for non-Catholics, if our Lord has really instituted and left behind Him such a gift and such a command, it is easy—or rather it is not easy—to understand how much they lose as long as they do not recognise it. And as it is impossible but that every non-Catholic, unless he is very ignorant, must have some doubts or suspicions that the Catholic doctrine of the Mass is Christ's doctrine, it is the plain duty of all to endeavour to understand the proofs of the doctrine and the meaning of the institutions.

I say that no non-Catholic can help having suspicions of this sort. For he has only to glance over the very surface of the history of the Christian Church. If there is one thing more certain than another it is that, from the beginning, there has been a Eucharistic service or celebration of some kind

There is a word translated 'ministering' or to 'minister' in the New Testament which, in the original Greek is 'liturgizing' or going through a solemn, external, orderly, public act of worship, with gestures and ceremonies. If we compare two passages of the Acts of the Apostles, we shall find the meaning of this word illustrated in a striking manner. In xix. 22, it is stated the Apostle Paul sent away into Macedonia 'two of those who ministered to him.' The word used here is the ordinary Greek word for 'serving'—the same as is used in vi. 2, of 'serving at tables.' But when, in xiii. 2, the holy writer says, 'As they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Ghost said to them, Separate unto me Saul and Barnabas,' the ministry indicated is of a very different kind. The word is 'liturgizing,' or 'performing the liturgy;' and we cannot doubt that the inspiration or revelation here related was given at a more than usually solemn and devout Eucharistic service. This word, adopted from current Greek speech by the sacred writers, under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, immediately passed into the sacred terminology of the Christian Church. A great many non-Catholics think that the Mass is a modern invention due to the innovating and arbitrary action of Rome. But the essentials of the Mass can be proved to have been as they are now, and even to have been fixed in something like the same order as now, from the year 150 downwards. We clearly see in the writings of St. Justin Martyr, who died in the year 139, that there were lessons and readings from the Prophets, Apostles, and Evangelists, as there are now. The altar was covered with linen.

The bread and the chalice with wine mingled with a little water were presented. The 'Sursum corda' and the Preface followed. The words of consecration, accompanied by the sign of the Cross, were pronounced. The Host was broken. There were prayers for the living and the dead. The Pater Noster was said. Holy Communion followed. The faithful were taught to say, 'Lord, I am not worthy,' when they went up to communicate. With some differences, these rites can, therefore, be *proved* to have been used *almost from apostolic times* universally—that is, in Jerusalem, in Alexandria, in Antioch, in Rome, and in due time in Constantinople, in Africa generally, in Spain, Gaul, and Britain. The writings of the great Fathers of the Church are in fact full of allusions from which we can in great measure reconstruct the Eucharistic liturgy as it was carried out in the several cities and countries where they lived.

In England, for 500 years before the so-called Reformation, to say nothing of the 400 years before that, the Mass (as is proved by published books and non-Catholic authorities) was simply the Roman Mass as said in this Church at this day; and no writer that I ever heard of has even ventured to assert that there was any noticeable difference, except in one passage, omitted in our present liturgy, which seems to imply communion under both kinds; though it is certain that our forefathers did not communicate under both kinds.

Thus we have before us the fact, clear and indisputable, that a solemn Eucharistic service has been a distinctive rite and teaching of the Catholic Church from the apostolic age to our own. That this service is

substantially the same as what is now known as the Catholic Mass is also most clearly evident. And so far as there is any diversity in the modes of performing this grand act which have prevailed in so many countries, among such various peoples, and in the course of so many centuries, it would be most easy to show in detail how the Roman Mass of the present day—not the only existing liturgical form of the Eucharistic sacrifice, but by far the most widely spread—is a legitimate and natural development in which essentials are unaltered, and in which every addition or alteration in the accessories is based upon enlightened Christian truth and is sanctioned by venerable tradition. It is certain, moreover, that if the ancient Eucharistic services are not now legitimately represented by the Catholic Mass, they have utterly died out and have no successors at all. In no one of the many varieties of Protestantism is there found any rite that can even pretend to be the survival of the ancient Eucharistic liturgy. The Communion service of the Anglican Church may be taken as the nearest approach to a liturgical service. But the Anglican ‘Communion service is only a Communion; there is no offering, much less any sacrificial form or true and real priest. And it is only a small proportion of Anglicans, not including, as far as I know, one single Bishop exercising legal jurisdiction, who think there is anything more in it than a commemoration of our Lord’s Last Supper. It was characteristic of the Reformation to suppress the Catholic Mass which in its substantial features was, and is, identical with the liturgies of the third, fourth, and fifth centuries. Wherever Protestan-

tism began to prevail, the whole outward worship of the people was at once altered; for the great feature in that worship was the liturgy. The Eucharist may be said to have disappeared. People, no doubt, took the Sacrament, as it was called, and take it. But the grand liturgical rite was done away with; the altar was removed, and made way for a common table; the lights were put out; the Eucharistic vestments were abolished; the priest was no longer a 'massing' priest; the old churches, and especially the grand cathedrals, became in great measure useless, and by degrees unintelligible, for the few people who remained to take Communion after the congregation had gone out seemed rather to be following their private devotion or fancy than carrying out the most solemn of the ordinances of Jesus Christ. Nothing need be said of the various forms under which some of the Nonconformist bodies celebrate the Lord's Supper. Their authorities would be the first to proclaim that such a rite, in their chapels, had only the slightest connection with the liturgy of a Basil, or a Chrysostom; of Jerusalem, of Constantinople, or of Rome. For better, or for worse, the Nonconformists and the large majority of Anglicans would admit that the idea of the Eucharist with them is an idea substantially and essentially different from that which prevailed in East and West for 1500 years before the so-called Reformation. They would admit this; and perhaps they would glory in it. But to any serious-minded and reflecting Protestant it must be a terrible claim to make—an awful challenge to put forward. Christianity with and without a Eucharistic sacrificial liturgy is Christianity with two

very different meanings. If they are right, Christianity is a religion without a public liturgical act; if they are wrong, they must be said to be in the dark in regard to an integral, a substantial, and even an essential portion of the religion of Christ.

It is both easy, and at the same time very difficult, to explain or describe what the Mass is. In its external aspect it is clear, evident, unmistakeable. In its hidden essence and nature, it is one of these 'high things of God, which, like everything connected with the Incarnation, touches both the lowly earth and the lofty heavens. When Jacob laid his head upon his stony pillow on a night long ago in a rocky desert in the land of Canaan, he saw the heavens open above him as he slept, and heavenly spirits coming down and going up. And he called that place the 'house of God' and the 'gate of Heaven;' and he consecrated an altar there. That revelation was a figure and a type of the heavenly influences which were to pass from heaven to earth—of the worship and longing that were to pass from earth to heaven—wherever the God-man should set His foot, or leave the imprint of His word and His institution. And the vision of the sleeping Patriarch is fulfilled best and most completely in the Christian Church and the chief adornment of the Christian Church—the fixed and stable stone of the Christian altar.

The altar of the Christian Church is not, like the stone of Bethel, set up in one only spot of the earth. The roof of the Christian temple is not seen only among the hills and the ravines of one historic site in Palestine. The

altar of Christianity is at this moment well-nigh as widely to be found even as the name of Christian. It stands, in old Christian lands, canopied by great cathedrals; in the dim sanctuaries of old parish churches; amid the colour and the freshness of temples which only date from yesterday. In countries where the Faith is lost, the altar has survived or been set up again; sometimes in a hired room, sometimes in the humble cottage of a believer (who is surely blessed as Obededom when he harboured the Ark of the Covenant on his threshing-floor!); sometimes again in the schools of children; sometimes under a roof which the pence of the poor and the sacrifices of the rich have combined to raise aloft. In the lands of the heathen, the altar is pushed forward wherever the light of the Gospel advances; on the clearing of the forest, on the tropical banks of African rivers, among the huts of far-off savages, the priest sets up a Bethel—a house of God; sets up his little altar and makes ready for his Mass. The missionary in China or in Africa does this day what Peter did in Antioch, Paul in Pagan Rome, Mark in Alexandria, a hundred Popes in the Catacombs, a thousand Bishops and martyrs in the red and hunted days of the persecutions. Between the day when Peter first went through the Eucharistic liturgy and the breaking of bread in Jerusalem, and the Mass which was said this morning, how many centuries and how vast a stream of human life! Between the wooden altar, existing still, used by St. Peter in Rome, and the thin slab of stone which the Lazarist or the Capuchin carries painfully under tropical skies or in

the frozen zones of Western Canada, how various a history and how long a tale if the tale were told ! Mass in the Catacombs, when the fierce band of the heathen persecutor often burst in and slew the Pontiff at the altar ; Mass in old churches like those of Ravenna, amid the splendour of a Christian Roman civilisation, doomed to die ; Mass in bowers of green branches in German or English forests ; Mass on the wild sea-islands of the Western coasts, said by the monks of St. Columba or St. Ninian ; Mass in the Saxon monasteries of England, —Wearmouth, Whitby, Ripon, Peterborough, Sherborne ; Mass in the glorious cathedrals of the middle ages, thronged with the great, the rich, the brave, and the poor ; Mass in the little parish churches of Wales, whose very shape, divided as they are into sanctuary, presbytery, and nave, preaches eloquently of what used to take place there ; Mass in days of persecution, among the hills and in the remote cabins of faithful Ireland, in the hiding-places of England and Wales ; Mass, again, in happier days, when our altars once more are seen and our offerings are not torn from us—here is a sketch of that long and various historic chain which has never been broken and which still goes lengthening out, until the last priest shall say the last Mass before our Lord shall come to judge the world. And no one can tell—no Angel's pen could write—all that the Mass has been during these Christian centuries to the successive generations of Christian people. To the priest, the Mass has been the daily bread of grace, of strength and of consolation. To the people, it has been religion, worship, devotion, the lifting up of the heart, the eleva-

tion of the mind to higher things in the midst of worldly work and solicitude. To Christian flocks, the Sunday Mass has been union, light, and consolation. To the Christian nation, the solemn Mass has been triumph, thanksgiving, sorrow, union of mind in the presence of our Saviour Jesus Christ. Kings have first put on their crowns at Mass, parliaments have begun their sessions with it, justice has opened her courts by assisting at it, universities have begun their labours by solemnly attending it. The Mass has been the grand feature of a Christian marriage. And the solemn Mass of Requiem has sanctified mourning and taught the bereaved how to be resigned, whilst it has carried the best of all comfort to the departed soul. Of what the Mass has been to individual souls, the story is only known to God. There come out in that stupendous commentary upon the Incarnation which is called the 'Lives of the Saints,' proofs the most ample how the Mass has in every age been the joy and the chiefest treasure of souls which have given themselves to Jesus Christ. When we read that St. Dominic could hardly get through Mass for weeping, and that St. Ignatius took a year to prepare himself for his first Mass, we understand that these illuminated hearts knew divine secrets hidden from other men. If Vincent de Paul and Francis de Sales, who always reminded men of the face and presence of Christ, were more completely transfigured to His likeness when saying Mass, it seems only natural that it should be so. If contemplatives like Blessed Henry Suso could not say 'Sursum corda' without opening the floodgates of heavenly revelation which seemed to be infinite, at what

other time would such a visitation be more in place? Great pastors, like Thomas of Canterbury and Charles Borromeo, would never let a day go by, in health or in sickness, without standing at the altar of God. We read of holy men, pale, thin, and wrinkled with trouble, work, and age, whose faces became transformed to youth and colour and strange beauty when they were celebrating Mass. We read that devoted men, like John Baptist de la Salle, the founder of the brothers of the Christian schools, were so illuminated during Mass, that people knew it and lay in wait for him to ask him questions as he left the Church—questions he was often too rapt in God even to hear. We read that great ladies, like St. Hedwig of Poland, and Blessed Margaret of Savoy, thought it a part of their high office and duty to assist as often as possible with all their Court at the public Mass in the church. And it is related of a saintly Christian heroine like Joan of Arc, that on her perilous journey to seek the king, she would say each morning to her knights, 'Is it possible to hear Mass?' And when she was in camp before the enemy, at sunrise she would seek the church, and there in her armour would kneel in the midst of the soldiers at the holy Mass. Of another hero, John Sobieski, it is well known how on that never-to-be-forgotten 12th of September, with the Turk between him and Vienna, he began the day of his triumph by hearing and serving at Mass. These are single pearls of a glorious history, gleamed from the records of a thousand years and more. But each of those years has had its tale of days, and each day its glory of masses, and of every Mass in all that time might be

written, were they known, records of grace given, of devotion, and of heavenly visitation. Here, in a non-Catholic country, the Masses are few, in comparison with the multitudes of the people, and even with the numbers of old churches where Mass once was said. And perhaps even the few Masses which there are, are poorly attended, considering what the Mass is. But what the Mass has been it is now; and those who are happy enough to be able and willing to come, in the dawn of the winter's morning or at the opening of the summer's day, to this altar, or to other altars, could tell as their forefathers have told how truly they have 'tasted and seen that the Lord is sweet.'

To explain adequately the meaning and essence of the Mass, we should have to begin with the mystery of the Real Presence. But at this moment we have no leisure to dwell upon that. Let me only say this. All who believe in the Bible, believe that on the day of our Lord's Resurrection He appeared in the midst of His disciples, 'the doors being shut.'¹ That is, His real and true Body, as His soul assumed it when He rose again, passed through material substance. I do not say this is the same as that which takes place in the consecration of the Eucharist; there, the substance of bread is destroyed, the appearance only remaining; but what everyone must see is that if our Lord's Blessed Body could pass through stone and wood and yet still be a true Body and not a phantom, there is nothing contrary to reason in its being present in the Host. Much more might be said upon this point; but

¹ John xxii. 19.

my object is to remind those who have a difficulty in accepting literally the words, 'This is My body,' that the very least that can be said is that we do not know enough about the state and conditions of a glorified and (in a sense) spiritualised body like our Lord's to be able to pronounce by our own reason that such a presence is impossible.

Taking for granted, then, that the duly ordained priests of the Christian Church have the power given them, by the will of her Head and Founder, Christ, to consecrate and bring down on the altar, the Body and Blood, the Soul and the Divinity of Jesus Christ, we may best describe the Mass by saying that it is the liturgical service which contains the Consecration, with a preparation before it, and with intercessory prayers and holy Communion after it. It would be impossible for me now to describe, or even to name singly, the different rites of the Mass. There are books which do it; and frequently, from the pulpit, the Catholic pastor explains to his flock, and to strangers, the holy and august forms and ceremonies which surround the mystical immolation of the Lamb without spot. Let us all remember this;—there is not a ceremony of the Mass, not a prayer, not a genuflection, not a vestment worn, which has not been prescribed by ancient saints, if not by the Apostles themselves, and which has not upon it the stamp and the sanctity of a hoary and a venerable tradition. There is not a symbol of office in the country—not a crown or a flag, a chain or a robe, which is not of yesterday, compared with the stole and the chasuble of the priest at the altar. Such things must not be mocked at.

Rather, they must be studied by believers and non-believers alike ; and you may be quite certain that no one will study them without finding himself nearer to the light and the truth which they symbolise.

But, omitting all consideration on the present occasion of the surroundings of the great liturgical Christian act, what is its essence, its substance, its innermost heart and core ? The Catholic answers at once : The unbloody Sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ.

At the word Sacrifice the mind pictures bloody rites and dying victims ; it imagines the knife, the axe, the fire. Of such a kind were many Sacrifices under the Jewish Covenant ; such Sacrifices were found the world over, under every climate, among believers in God, as well as in every variety of paganism and idolatry. And the universal prevalence of Sacrifice, and even of Sacrifice in blood and death, points to a primitive revelation of Divine worship, of the sinfulness of the world and of the need of expiation. But there were sacrifices, and true sacrifices, without the shedding of blood. The destruction of lifeless things was, under certain conditions, Sacrifice, as when wine was poured out upon the ground ; and as when bread, corn, wine, oil, first-fruits, and incense were offered to God under the Jewish law. What was offered must be destroyed ; not always literally destroyed, but changed, depreciated, smitten, cast forth, banished, or in some sense marked as alienated from man's use, never more to be used by him. Thus there was in the Old Law the Sacrifice of the two goats for sin : one was slain ; the other was driven forth into the wilderness : both were sacrificed.

When the time came for the Great Sacrifice, the sanctification of all Sacrifices and the consummation of all, the Sacrifice of God made Man, we know—and may the thought never leave our hearts!—that His Sacrifice was one of blood; the altar was the Cross, the priest and the victim Himself. Lifting up His sacred Heart to His heavenly Father; adoring, worshipping, expiating, impetrating, with the deepest acts of that most holy Heart; using the sharp sword of His immense sufferings to intensify those mighty and sovereign acts of oblation; He offered Himself, He smote Himself, He died upon the Cross. All was finished. No other Sacrifice could be. It was complete and full, as the fountains of God's power and loving kindness are full, for evermore.

But whilst Jesus sitteth at the right hand of God, immortal and impassible, man is born, man lives, man is weak, and man falls into sin. The fountains of grace are full; but how is the child of Adam to approach them? Let him believe and pray; it is enough, say some. I also say it is enough; but belief and prayer are gifts too, and man is weak, distracted, occupied, tempted, blind, and sensual. Therefore, to apply the Sacrifice of the Cross—to kindle the fervour of faith, to fan the flame of prayer, to attract the heart to sorrow and amendment, to lift poor human acts into divine efficacy—the loving Heart of Jesus has thought of a device, and a device which only His love could have carried into effect. He has decreed that the Sacrifice of Calvary shall be renewed every day as the days go round.

But Jesus could not suffer any more; He could not be pierced again and die as on Good Friday. He must,

therefore, endure some mark, some real change of state, some moral death. Some mystical knife must wound Him. Some humiliation must smite Him, some annihilation, some pouring out, some destruction.

Now, look upon the little round of the Host, just consecrated by the word of Christ's minister. That is Jesus, Christ. Yes, under that lowly appearance, in that little circle, beneath that poor appearance of common bread. Imprisoned, bound, subject, moved hither and thither—is He not annihilated? Is He not slain? Truly, really smitten with the sword of the word—truly slain upon the altar? And when the chalice is next separately consecrated, though in that chalice there is the whole Christ, and not merely the precious blood; and though, had Christ so willed, the Sacrifice would have been true and complete in a single consecration, yet that second consecration marks with almost dramatic emphasis the mystical blood-shedding, and the fact that the Mass is intended to commemorate the bloody Sacrifice of the Cross.

Such then is the essence of the Mass. Such is the great outward, solemn, liturgical act, which is the renewal and commemoration of the Sacrifice of the Cross. God could have brought us near to the fountains of our Saviour's blood without this act, or any act. But the great rule revealed in and by the Incarnation is, that He everywhere institutes and ordains in such a manner as to make it *easy* for man to approach God and God's mercy. 'Copiosa apud Eum redemptio.' His Redemption is not only sufficient but overflowing—overflowing in the fulness with which it reaches the

nature of man and man's weaknesses. Thus in the Mass, every spring and root of human nature is touched. In the Real Presence we have the Incarnate God in our midst, partly by faith and partly by the senses; in the consecration we have the act of Calvary renewed; in the whole Mass, we have a liturgical service capable at once of arousing the private devotion of an individual, and of lending itself to the widest emotions of a community or a nation; a service which may be gone through in a dim corner of the Church by one priest with a few worshippers, and yet which is appropriately accompanied by all that is grand in architecture, in music, and in ornament, and may be attended by thronging thousands. We have this most real and striking act multiplied every day, brought home to every heart and soul. Every morning the mighty intercessor, who pleads for us for evermore, stretches out his arms in the midst of people. How much more true now is that word of the Prophet in his affliction, 'Thy mercies are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness.'² Yes, how great is the faithfulness of our Saviour Jesus Christ. For us men, and for our salvation, He once came and died; for us He seems unable to rest in the Heavens, coming down again with far more efficacy than the angels who flashed upon the earth in the olden times; coming and remaining in Sacrament and Sacrifice, in visitation and in grace; ever ready, ever waiting; so that no man who is of good will can miss His redemption, and none can be lost but by his own fault; and, chief of all His mercies, immolating Himself day by day on those

² Thren. iii. 23.

altars where it is His dearest wish that His servants should draw near and use the salvation that He brings in His hand.

THE HARVEST OF THE HOLY MASS.

The Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said. . . I have chosen this place to myself for a house of Sacrifice. . . . My eyes shall be open and my ears attentive to the prayer of him that shall pray in this place ; for I have chosen and have sanctified this place, that my name may be there for ever, and my eyes and my heart may remain there perpetually. 2 PARALIP. (called in the Hebrew the *Chronicles*) vii. 12, 15, 16.

IN considering the Holy Sacrifice devotionally and practically, our first thought is of the marvellous nearness of God which the Mass implies. To be near to God—that is, to have Him present to our mind and our faculties, and to have our hearts lifted up to Him—this is the precious purpose and object of our mortal life. It was to bring about this nearness that God the Son became Man and dwelt amongst us, in the Incarnation. This nearness is the reason of the whole of that beneficent legacy which Jesus in ascending to Heaven has left behind Him. His spirit dwells by grace in our souls. His hand is on us, in the Sacraments. His voice reaches us, in the perpetual teaching of the Church. His real Presence makes a home for itself in our midst, as a friend might dwell a few doors from us. And the moment of His nearest approach to us—the moment when, taking every circumstance into consideration, He comes most truly into our presence and we most deeply take His presence in—is the moment of the Mass. In

a Sacrament you have a true touch of Christ's hand, of a kind which no merely human hand could effect. In Holy Communion, you have a visitor Who, as He dwells with you a moment and passes away, leaves the fragrance of His presence lingering for many an hour in your heart and will. But in the Mass, you have the very Sacrifice of the world's redemption applied to your own soul and body. When you kneel before the altar, you are in the presence not merely of the great God, Who is everywhere, but of God in the flesh which He has put on to attract you to Him; you have not merely God in the flesh, but that God doing His most stupendous work. The Blessed Sacrament, had it been given us without the Mass, were a wonderful gift and treasure, the Holy Communion an unfathomable depth of condescension; but consider how much more there is in the Mass. Not merely the beautiful and consoling presence, as of Jesus when in His infancy He slumbered on His mother's breast, to all appearance an unconscious babe; not merely the sweet visitation of the Master Who turned His look on Peter or allowed John to rest upon His bosom; but besides all this, Jesus in His greatest action—the action of Calvary; the awful action of the Redemption; the act which angels and men had looked for and longed for; the act which nature trembled and hid herself to witness; the act which shook the foundations of all this world and reached downwards into all the chambers of the grave and the dread prison house of the world below. This is the act of the Mass. Of the two grand universal acts of Christ Jesus, the redeeming Sacrifice and the Last Judgment, the latter, the Judgment, will be done in

overwhelming publicity, in the actual presence of every human creature summoned by the angels before His face. But the former, the universal Sacrifice, was once and for all done in obscurity—in a corner of the earth, in a remote city, in the loneliness of Calvary, in the gloom of the darkened sun; once and for all; yet only to be made as widely known as the Judgment itself, as widely seen as the Cross will be seen when it comes in the clouds of Heaven, as widely heard as the very summons of the angel's trumpet. For that act lives and survives in the Christian Mass. The Mass is the great Christian Sacrifice not multiplied, but applied. The Sacrifice exists; in the Mass, it exists for us who are present at it, and for all men. The cataracts of the heavenly deep were broken up when Jesus said, 'It is finished,' and the bounteous and merciful rain has been falling ever since; and the rainbow made by Faith upon those never-ceasing showers of grace gladdens the heart of man wherever the sun can shine; and as no two gazers ever see just the same rainbow, but each sees the radiance refracted to himself, so the great Sacrifice repeats its power and multiplies its many-hued arch of grace and peace the world over. It is this reproduction of the action of the Cross which makes the Mass a moment of such special union and association between God and His creatures. On Calvary, the Saviour of the world did an act which was full of wonderful efficacy; in which the Supreme God was supremely worshipped, the just God adequately propitiated, the bounteous God abundantly thanked, the mighty God efficiently besought for grace and help. That these things should be done is the particular

interest of every single soul of man and woman. That each soul should, however feebly, take a part in doing all this is the object for which that soul was made, and the price of its citizenship in the world to come. And in the Mass, Christ does all this continuously and unceasingly ; and our being present at Mass means that He does all this especially on our behalf ; and, more than that, He takes up our own poor and ineffective acts, and lifts them up to Heaven ; catches them up in the very whirlwind and mounting eddies of His own infinitely strong and perfect acts, and so carries them to the throne. And, according to the rule of the Incarnation, as human acts ascend, divine power comes down ; the soul of him who is present at the Mass is strengthened and refreshed by the virtue of the Cross and Passion, as men are refreshed when the long dryness has given way and the welcome rain has come at last. In one word, Jesus Christ, in the Mass, takes up the human creature who assists at it and holds his poor heart fast within the burning circle of his own heart, and so the adoration and the holocaust of both go up to the Father together, and the creature is changed and lifted by that unspeakable embrace and union.

I am sure that very many of us have singularly defective ideas as to what our Lord really does in the Mass. That great act is so quiet, so brief, so frequent, that we have grown too accustomed to it ; and custom has led to inattention, and inattention to indifference. We are going on under a great mistake. The Mass is a serious matter, both for priests and for people. The priest labours, but if he does not sanctify the Mass in himself and in his

flock, his labour is barren. The people come to church, perhaps, and say their prayers; but if they do not sanctify the Mass, by understanding about it and following it with burning hearts, they might almost as well belong to a sect or a heresy. They have to understand what Christ does. Two great things have to be done, and with both they are concerned. The first thing is to discharge the world's duty and debt to God. The second is to obtain God's grace and mercy for the world. And under these two grand and wide divisions of the work of the great Priest of the Mass, there comes also each man's own share in paying that debt and in obtaining that grace.

The debt which Christ pays—the mighty homage which He offers—is two-fold. He pays adoration, and He renders thanks. In other words, the first object of the Mass is the acknowledgment of the supreme dominion of God over all created things, and of our subjection to God and dependence on Him. You have read of sacrifices, in the Bible and elsewhere. You may perhaps remember some picture of a sacrifice—for instance that of Noe, after he had left the ark and the waters had almost subsided. There was the altar with its stones; the patriarch with the sacrificial knife; the victim on the altar; the flames and the smoke mounting up into the heavens; and men and women in attitude of adoration round about. In the Mass there is a fair linen cloth spread on the altar; no knife, no blood, no flames; and there is a priest and a victim, and there are worshippers. The priest is the great High Priest, Whose throne is above all the heavens, Who acts there through a minister on whose head has been laid the hand and the power of the apostolic succession.

The worshippers round about can see no smoke ascending to the skies. But they know—we all know—that a spiritual homage goes up from that Immaculate Lamb, and from the Heart of that great High Priest, of such mighty power and efficacy, that every Mass that is said would suffice to pay the debt of the adoration of a million worlds. For it is the homage of the heart of the God-man, and therefore its value is simply infinite, as are all the acts of a Divine Person. How glorious it is to think that the Omnipotent, Who is worthy of power and glory and blessing, here receives to the utmost limit the homage which He ought to have! If the circling worlds which compose some vast system in the spaces of the universe were to lose their dependence on their central sun, and to wander without law in their mighty courses, then there would be crash and ruin universal. But when the huge and flaming ruler of their orbits holds them in his grasp, and they move in all their strength and beauty, one within another's track, doing homage and paying service, then there is harmony and beauty, the reign of law, the exquisite completeness of order on the grandest scale. When the moral universe—the world of man's heart—is withdrawn from dependence on its Creator and its God, the crash may not be audible as yet, and the ruin may seem to be delayed, though both will come as sure as death will come. But there is no sight of beauty and of grandeur which ought to touch our inmost nature with so exquisite a joy as to know that the greatest of all the universes—the universe of immortal souls—is in the order and the splendour of its real dependence on

God. One day, and that not far off, this necessary law must and will be vindicated and prevail. At the judgment the interposition of the immortal King Himself will end whatever disorder or disobedience there may be. But meanwhile, in the Mass, the Heart of that King made man rights the universal system of all this world; because that Heart offers homage, and that homage is human, and yet greater than all humanity. Then the Creator of Heaven and earth receives from this earth which He has made the due which eternal law requires; and we, His creatures, who know Him in part and wish to give our hearts to Him, are rightly filled with joy inexpressible to know that the Sovereign Majesty is fitly worshipped and perfectly adored. This happens in the Mass. In all the centuries, hearts of men have worshipped and sacrifice has been made; God has always accepted the offering of a simple and humble heart; but what is man's offering to the Majesty of the Infinite! In all the ages of duration since they began to be, the Angels have worshipped with jealous ministration round the throne of their King. But all their adoration, all the incense of their censers, all the gold of their crowns, all the music of their hymns and harps, have not amounted to what was more than finite—it has all been bounded, limited, circumscribed. Round the Christian altar they with you throng and pray; you visible, they invisible but not unfelt; and they, like you, find the thought which moves them most to be, that now is the King of all Kings worshipped to the utmost limits even of that infinity to which limits are unknown.

The second object, or end, of the Mass is Thanksgiving. From this, it takes the name of Eucharistic. Thanksgiving is almost another name for worship. But it implies a new and a touching relation to God. We should have been bound to worship merely by our creation, whether or not He had done any other thing for us—if that were possible. But it is not possible, considering Who God is and what we are. It is not possible but that His infinite goodness should have done more than was merely implied in the fact of creation. This is not the moment to rehearse the benefits and the loving-kindnesses of God the Father of Heaven. There is one which stands out from all the rest. What would it have profited us, sings the Church in her Liturgy, to be born, unless we had also been granted the gift of Redemption? It is for the gift of our Redemption that the Mass is specially intended to thank Almighty God. Redemption means the coming of Jesus—His life, His passion, His example. It means His everliving Presence, His Sacraments, His word of truth in our midst. It means grace, a good life, a happy death, and the pledge of life everlasting, which is the blissful vision of our Creator's face. It means all that life is worth living for. In the Mass Christ offers, and we offer with Him, the never-ceasing clean oblation which thanks God adequately for all this. You will observe how the name of Eucharist, or thank-offering, has become attached to the Mass, and to the Blessed Sacrament. The reason seems to be that, taking mankind as they are, if they will only remember God's great mercies and be thankful for them, the purpose of the

Mass is fulfilled. Thanksgiving, as I have said, includes worship, and it includes love. When the faithful flock of Christ assembles round His altar, it is expected to adore and worship, it is true; but its adoration and worship have an object, not far away in the unexplored distances of Heaven, but very near—even before their eyes. They have the God-man before them; His mighty attributes of deity are not so visible or so prominent as His lowliness, His suffering and His redeeming mercy; therefore, if they are grateful to Him, if they are touched with His kindness and softened by His human life and suffering, it is enough; they do worship, they do adore, not perhaps with the abstract contemplation of pure spirits, but with that emotion of the human heart which the Incarnation has turned into worship, and which the sacred humanity has spent itself to attract and to sanctify.

Thus far we have considered how the holy Mass pays the world's debt to God; pays it completely, because the priest and the victim is Jesus the Son of God; pays it for us personally, by associating us, when we assist at it, in the mighty oblation, the grand spiritual holocaust which goes up for evermore from earth to Heaven. We pass on now to speak of that which comes from Heaven to earth—of the mercy which is showered down on the whole world, on the living and the dead, and more particularly on all who assist. The third fruit, or effect of the Mass, therefore, is propitiation. And here we enter upon a wide field of meditation. The Sacrifice of the Cross fully propitiated Almighty God, and paid a full and superabundant ransom for sin; a ransom rich

enough to extinguish all pain and punishment, even the fires of hell itself. But we know that the great Sacrifice has not actually applied its propitiatory effect to every human soul without some further means. To deny this would be to assert that all men, possessed of free-will as they are, whatever be their actual sins and evil will, are all and always justified and sanctified, and will all be saved. But if this were true, what need of Church or Sacrament, or of Bible, or revelation; what need of the ten commandments, or what is the sense of the preaching of Christ? Therefore the propitiation of the Cross has to be applied. Putting aside Baptism, and the Sacraments generally, and also prayer, I say that the grand means of applying the propitiation of the Sacrifice of the Cross is the Sacrifice of the Mass. Were I urging a man or a woman to hear Mass as often as possible, I would say, Come to Mass as you would have come to the foot of the Cross on Calvary, and be washed from your sins and your guiltiness in the Precious Blood. I do not say that the Mass directly forgives sins, like the Sacrament of Penance does. But it moves God to give the graces of repentance. It gives reflection, it gives sorrow, it gives good purposes, and it gives the desire of confession. And take notice that the Mass *infallibly* has this effect: that is, if it is offered for a sinner it infallibly obtains for him actual graces of contrition, unless that sinner is at the moment wilfully hardening his heart. If, on the other hand, the sinful being for whom it is offered has already begun to believe, to fear God, and to turn to Him, then that Mass will infallibly lead him to complete his repentance by a

good confession (if he can go to confession), and to receive the pardon of his sins. But the propitiatory power and virtue of this most holy Sacrifice does not stop here. We have seen how it brings about the forgiveness of sins; but the punishments of sin often remain to be paid after sin is forgiven; I mean, those penalties which must, unless they are remitted, be undergone either in this life or in purgatory. The Mass, by its own direct and immediate efficacy, remits these dark accompaniments of our fallen state. What visitations are prevented by the Mass, what pain averted, we cannot precisely define, for one particular case is different from another; one man is better disposed than another, one man may be benefited by affliction, another not. Nevertheless, this general principle is certain; that the Mass makes satisfaction, and does so without fail and infallibly, in regard to all punishment for sin, in respect to all who are in the grace of God, whether they are living or dead. Not all pain is remitted by one Mass; and as to how much is forgiven by each Mass we do not know; but it is probable that the better our dispositions are, the more is forgiven us; and with regard to the departed, we may suppose that God takes into consideration the degree of devotion and piety in which they died. Thus, by the triumphant device of the Sacred Heart, the Sacrifice of the Cross diffuses its healing power over all the world of human interests. It not only kills out deadly sin in the way we have seen, but its beneficent effects reach to every pain, to every suffering, to every trouble and sorrow which sin, even when there is security against hell-fire,

has brought upon the world. Man has to co-operate in this. The great flood of mercy does not reach men unless there is some agency of man ; the human priest, the human presence—such must ever be the management of God, Who, although He made us without consulting us, will not, and cannot, save us without our co-operation. But what has man to do ! How slight, how easy is the effort which he is called upon to make in comparison with the power which he puts in motion ! It is like the act of a child who presses the lever which controls the barriers of the flood ; one touch and the deluge pours over the plain. Yes, one touch, one little act, and the divine flood of our Saviour's mercy pours over the living world, and over the graves of the just who sleep in Christ. One Mass, and the fetters fall from the limbs of imperfect men, fetters invisible now, but not the less real in the future chastisement they ensure. One Mass, and scourges are turned away from nations and from flocks. One Mass, and judgments which are hanging over those who are dear to us are prevented and changed to mercy. One Mass, and blessings, spiritual and temporal, so far as God sees they will profit, are poured out from the hand of Him Who ever longs to bless, on the souls, the bodies, the interests, the lives, the aspirations of Christian men and women, who happily understand how near is the Lord. And one Mass brightens the realms of Purgatory, as the serene morning lifts the mists of the night ; sending souls to their longed-for Heaven, lightening the longing of those who stay, hastening their purification, and shortening the painful schooling which those have to undergo in the world to come, who have not

sufficiently cared for or desired in this the blissful vision of their Creator.

There is a fourth fruit of the Mass, a fourth object of this most holy Sacrifice, and it is that of impetration ; that is to say, the Mass obtains for us all graces, spiritual and temporal. Practically, we have spoken of this already. But the difference between the Mass as a propitiatory and as impetratory is this : propitiation means that it satisfies for sin, and removes the effects of sin ; and since the removal of evil means the obtaining of good, such propitiation so far includes impetration. But, in truth, if there were no such thing as sin, and never had been, the Mass would have been the great and beneficent principle, like the sun in the skies, which produces, fosters, ripens and distributes all the harvest of sweet and bounteous gifts, which the heart of the Father delights to bestow upon the children He has made. Even on this fallen earth we may sometimes leave the thought of sin and sin's consequences out of our thoughts. Even in fallen nature there are those who are pure, who have never fallen from God, or who have repented. God does not allow even sin—even that evil will of man, which He seems to forbear to meddle with, because He has made man free—He does not allow even this to shorten His might or contract His goodness. God has His saints—saints who are of every degree, from her, the Immaculate One, who never had in her favoured nature any slightest root or growth of sin, to the young child who is pure but not safe ; from the highest contemplatives and the heroic lovers of the Cross to the ordinary good and Christian man or woman, who loves God above all

things but struggles with many temptations. The grand source of holiness is the Mass, and holiness includes every good and perfect gift which cometh down from the Father of lights. The Apostles drew their heroic resolution from the Mass. The martyrs found their strength in the Mass, the Virgins their purity and their self-denial, every confessor of Christ his contempt of the world. The conversion of the world has been wrought, the institutions of Christendom built up, Christian nations made strong and stable by the Mass in their midst. In our own days, missionaries draw from the Mass their courage and their hope, hard-working priests their comfort, and all the pastors of souls the fruitfulness of their ministry. In the Mass the Christian family finds its unity, its mutual love and forbearance, the father comes to Mass and goes away with more strength against temptations; the mother with greater patience and sweetness; the children with desires to resist their passions and to give their hearts to God. In the Mass the young man should pray for the fear of God, for chastity and for sobriety, for he will obtain them all; at the Mass the young woman may bow her head and whisper her petition for steadiness, for self-denial, and for as much happiness as God her Father knows she ought to have—and she will surely have all she prays for. Here should the sorrowful come, and the heavy-burdened; here should the poor and the needy be gathered together; here should all those whose seek the Lord—that is, seek His knowledge, His love, and His help—find themselves on their knees, as around the throne of their King and Master—Who having spent Himself and been spent, even to the last

drop of His blood, for their sakes, sits now here in His mercy-seat with no other object, with no other wish than that all should come and carry away the treasures of His love.

One word in conclusion. If this is what the Mass is, why do not men value it more? I cannot tell. But I want to preach it to you. That perhaps is one way of making this flock at least think more of the Mass. I will not ask you to come to Mass on the week mornings, though many do; and there are many more who live close to the church who could manage to come. But I will ask you to do this: Make the most of a Mass when you hear one. Never miss Mass on Sunday. Do not be afraid of a long Mass. Do not be idle during the Mass. Use your prayer-book, or say your rosary, or worship and 'ask' God, out of your own head, following the priest. At a High Mass, use the time you are not kneeling to think, to look forward to the consecration, to rouse up your hearts to greater fervour and devotion. But be sure to make the most of every Mass you hear, and then I not only hope, but I know, the kingdom of God is at hand for you, and for all, and His fear, His light, His service, His love, and His consolations will be yours, and will remain with you, sanctifying the days and the hours as they pass, until the last hour strikes and the real day begins to break.

JESUS CHRIST REVEALS GOD.

Looking upon Christ the author and finisher of Faith. **HEBREWS**
xii. 2.

It is only by knowing Who, and What, is Jesus Christ, that we can answer a question which in these days most certainly requires an answer. What is Christianity? This instruction and the two which immediately follow will be devoted to giving such an answer to this inquiry as may lead some who call themselves Christians to search their hearts and see whether it truly is as they think. I take for granted that a Christian must believe in God, worship Him and serve Him. I assume that a Christian must accept the Divine authority of the Bible, and acknowledge and fairly live up to the ten commandments. Neither can anyone even pretend to be a Christian who does not in some sense recognise the Divine mission of our Lord Jesus Christ. I can imagine that I hear some one interpose here and say, 'Surely this is enough! What more must a Christian profess, what more must he do, than this?' Our special purpose will be to answer this question. In answering it, some things will be said with which, probably, all will agree; while some things, on the other hand, will be opposed to the views of one person, and others of another. I say frankly, I do not know the precise views,

on many of the matters which will enter into these instructions, of any of my non-Catholic friends. They are probably attached to some church or sect; they probably look up to some particular minister or preacher; but it is well known that, even on matters which all admit to be important, churches and denominations are very vague and indefinite; and the most assiduous frequenter of church or chapel will without scruple take leave to differ from the doctrine he there may hear preached. I may add that, as you will readily believe, I undertake to speak on the meaning of Christianity, precisely because I believe that a considerable number of persons who call themselves Christians are mistaken on this very point. We do not become Christians, that is, followers of Christ, by calling ourselves so. It is necessary to hold, to profess, and to do, all that Christ Himself commands or prescribes. No one can doubt that the most important element by far in the true comprehension of what Christianity is, is to understand Who or What is Jesus Christ Himself. It is possible to conceive religion without Christ, but not Christianity. The Hebrews worshipped God and saved their souls, not indeed without all reference to Christ, not without being saved by Christ, but without knowing Him. The heathen throughout the world were saved, when they were saved, through Christ's passion, but by the knowledge and worship of the true God, without the explicit knowledge of the Saviour that was to come. But when He came He established a new religion. Before He spoke to the world men were bound to believe in God,

in the world to come, in sin and in retribution. In our days if a man only believes or accepts as much as this he is not a Christian at all. The Apostles said to their converts, 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.' They did not say, believe in God, believe in the future life, or in the judgment. This much those converts were already presumed to hold. When St. Peter received into the Church and baptized the Roman officer Cornelius, not a Jew, be it observed,¹ he knew that the convert was already a 'religious man,' 'fearing God,' 'giving alms,' 'working justice,' and 'acceptable to God.' Nay, before baptism was administered the Holy Ghost fell upon him, and he was thus proved not merely to be in the state of sanctifying grace, holy and justified, but miraculously visited from on high. Yet St. Peter does not say, This is enough; on the contrary, he preaches to him Jesus Christ. Peace, he tells him, comes through Jesus Christ, Who is Lord of all. He had specially commanded His Apostles to preach Him to the people. He was the judge of the living and the dead. By His name all received remission of sins who believed in Him. And having thus instructed him, he commanded him to be baptized. And it is at the end of this very history, though not in immediate connection with it, that the inspired writer notes how at Antioch the disciples were first called Christians.

Let us try, then, to draw out what it was that our Lord's coming added to religion; for that it added a good deal is quite evident. Here it is not necessary that we should speak at any length of the way in which

¹ Acts x.

our Blessed Saviour Himself wrought our salvation. That He delivered us, ransomed us, paid a price for us, opened Heaven for us, we take for granted. But it will not be denied that this 'redemption' does not mean that all are actually and necessarily and finally saved, else all would be actually saved, and you and I would be in Heaven at this moment. He saves us, but He wills that we labour to save ourselves. Therefore He has not only brought about our salvation (as He could have done by a single act of His will, even without coming down from Heaven), but He has died for us, and died a very terrible death; and not only died, but lived a life; and not only lived, but taught; and finally, not only died, and lived and taught, but left behind Him a Church, and a system of Sacrifice and Sacraments.

God the Son became Man, in the way He did, in order that we, the creatures whom He has made for Himself, might be brought nearer to God on earth, and so make more secure that final and everlasting happiness which has been promised to us as our inheritance. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one cometh to the Father—that is, to God—but by Him. These words² were addressed to the Apostles on the night before the Passion. Thomas wanted to know how to reach the Father—how to get to God. In His answer our Lord let him know three things: first, that in order to attain God (by worship, or by prayer) there was no need to look beyond Himself. 'Lord, show us the Father.' 'He that seeth Me, seeth the Father also. How sayest thou, Show us the Father'? Secondly, that what was

² John xiv. 6,

asked of God, in the name of Jesus, would be done by Jesus Himself.³ 'Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in My name that will I do.'⁴ 'If you shall ask Me anything in My name that will I do.' Thus Jesus is God, and we obtain all good through His name. And thirdly, there was to be a perpetual presence of this same Jesus among men⁵—'I will not leave you orphans, I will come to you.' He was to ascend to Heaven—'Yet a little while, and the world seeth Me no more,⁶ but you see Me, because I live, and you shall live.' This cannot refer to the last judgment, for all the world will see Him then, but to some perpetual presence and working, to be primarily discerned by Faith in the Church to the end of time. It was realised when the Holy Ghost was given, and exists at this moment.

We may thus draw out, then, the purpose of our Lord's coming as He did. He came, first that He might *reveal* to us more vividly *God*, and *the truth* of God, and so give us light in darkness; secondly, that He might give us a new and easier way of *worshipping* and *praying*; and lastly, that He might be more effectually present to *strengthen* and *succour* us in our weakness and our continual sins. These three heads will give us all the definiteness we require in these considerations on Christianity; and we begin with the first.

Religion, however it may be defined, contains in its definitions the two most difficult words that have ever been used in the world. Religion signifies the relations between God and man, or between man and the Infinite

³ John xiv. 13.⁴ John xiv. 14.⁵ John xiv. 18.⁶ John xiv. 19.

Creator. 'God' and 'man.' None of us can understand either. God is simply the Infinite, and our thought and our imagination fail in the effort to reach Him; whilst man having been created with an immortal spirit, like to God, not in infinity, but in spirituality, and destined for God, cannot be understood unless we can understand God Himself.

The problem of finding God, of attaining to the knowledge of God, has been the great task of all earnest men, of all great thinkers, since the world began. There is that in the soul of man which at least indicates that God exists. But to know Him, to hold Him fast—this has been the difficulty. As the light of the primitive revelation faded out, the nations of the world lost sight of what had been shown to man in the earliest days, of the knowledge of God which existed even after the gates of Paradise had been closed. But their wise men, their 'seekers,' their thinkers, have left us records of their questionings, their glimpses and their longings. The religions of the East have preserved for us the thoughts of men who were not altogether in the dark as to the oneness and the holiness of God. The great men of Greece and of Rome have left us their testimonies to the existence of a Supreme Ruler of all things. Even the dim and inadequate traditions of savages and barbarians exist to tell us of the yearning of the human heart for one who will reward or will avenge after this life is over. But to the keenest intelligence, to the purest heart, the idea of the Infinite God has been hard to grasp; and to conceive that He could and did love and cherish those human creatures who were so distant

from Him, was harder than all. We have no eyes with which to penetrate the 'inaccessible light' of God, no ears to hear Him as He speaks in His own voice, no faculties to feel Him as He really is. His love, which our reason forces us to admit in theory, would seem to be as far off as the light of some most distant star, and as cold, too! In the 37th chapter of the Book of Job—that wonderful record of Gentile thoughts about the great God—the friend of Job exclaims, as if he were summing up all that nature had hitherto done, 'We cannot find Him! We cannot find Him! . . . He is ineffable! Therefore men shall *fear* Him, and all that seem to themselves to be wise shall not dare behold Him.'⁷

The Jewish race were better off. They knew more about God. He appeared to them by angels, and He spoke to them by angels and by prophets. Yet the great Prophet of the Old Testament had to declare that their Jehova was 'a hidden God.'⁸ And in that book which closes the Canon of the Old Testament—the Book of Machabees—a book which is full of the name of God, and of His unity, His might, His mercy, and His judgments—a book which is a living witness of the wonderful hold which belief in the one true God had upon the thoughts and the policy of the Jewish race—we find everywhere the sentiments of obedience, of confidence, and of awful fear; but we never find mention of love.

The difficulty, then, of bringing God within the reach of man's faculties was, in the nature of things, very

⁷ Job v. 21, 23.

⁸ Isaiah xlv. 15.

great. Man's faculties are not to be despised. He can make out a great deal more than he can see. He can look at nature and read her testimony to her Maker. He can read in her beauty, her law and her order how grand and mighty He must be Who made these things first. From the land and the ocean, the plain and the forest, the plants and the beasts, there goes up for ever an inarticulate psalm of testimony, which man's intelligence can understand, to the reality and the glory of the Creator. From the knowledge of his own heart, and from the history of men in their generations, a man finds that he has in his nature the seeds of the knowledge of truth, of virtue, and of justice—everlasting ideas which no barbarism can root out and no depravity can smother. He cannot help believing in the final triumph of what is good, and in an everlasting peace in the victory of the right. That is the way his heart is made, and he requires no logic to see what is plainly evident to eye-sight. But all this, valuable as it is, falls a long way short of the attainment of God. It proves God, but it does not bring Him into our homes and under our sight. But how can it be possible, it will be asked, to reach God in this life? The finite faculty cannot see the infinite. This was the problem to solve—a problem worthy of God Himself.

When Jesus, on that famous journey to Jerusalem from Galilee for the last time, entered the smiling and prosperous city of Jericho on an afternoon in early spring, a rich man, who had made much of his money dishonestly, wanted to see Him as He passed by. This man was Zachæus. But he could not see Him for the

crowd, and he was short of stature, and he climbed up into a tree. Then Jesus, coming past, stopped and spoke to him. He said, 'Come down.' Zachæus was happy enough to see Him at his leisure and to his eternal gain. And what did he see? A Man with a band of disciples, a Man with a sweet and majestic look, a Man with a history and a name; and yet the everlasting Jehova, Who had created him and all the world besides. This—this was the answer of omnipotence to the cry of humanity, Show us the Father—show us our God! The wise among men had answered the question in *their* way. They had advised weak and puny human nature to use this means and that—to get higher up, to lift itself by its own power, to climb on this and on that. But when the moment arrives, God says, 'Come down! Come down from your pretended wisdom, from your pride, from your criticism, from your self-sufficiency! The world is to be saved, and to be saved by the presence of its God; but be prepared to set human judgments aside and to accept the methods and the fashions of God, for God is to be seen in the stable and on the Cross!'

In truth, the great effect and change wrought in religion by that stupendous event called the Incarnation was to bring our God before our faculties to make us see Him. The Infinite stoops from the Heavens. He might have given us the price of our salvation and passed by. He might have flung us the boon of life everlasting and left us to ourselves. He might have lingered for a time, as a laden vessel lingers to leave food and comfort at a barren island, and then been seen no more. But

He has done very differently. He has entered into this world. He is now among the number of human things, and a part of the world's history. He has determined there shall be no mistake about His human nature. He was born at Bethlehem; His mother's name we know; He has a story; He has spoken and He has acted; and He has died. And He has summed up all His human attributes and incidents in a most sweet and mighty name, which is like a picture of Him to hang in every home, a banner to lead every good cause, and a hymn of music to cheer every struggling heart. And thus He stands before the men and women of that vast crowd which He is bent upon saving. He stands before their faculties—their eyes, their ears, their fancy and their feelings; He walks among them, speaks to them, and blesses them. No 'inaccessible light' conceals Him now; no rolling clouds are His covering, and the firmament of Heaven has been exchanged for the solid earth. Now truly is realised that boast of His old Hebrew race, that no nation hath its gods so near to it as Jehova is to them.⁹ For the straining of men's eyes hath ceased, the chafing of their hearts is at rest. That which they longed to see and to know, they have before them. That bright vision which the Heavens held so jealously is spread out at their feet. We have heard Him in Ephrata (Bethlehem), we have found Him in the fields of the woodland.¹⁰

St. John, the type of those who are truly Christians, and not Jews or Gentiles, exclaims: 'See what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should

⁹ Deut. iv. 7.

¹⁰ Ps. cxxxi. 6.

be called, and should be the Sons of God.'¹¹ The Incarnation, in revealing God, has revealed to us God's love for us. God's love is no longer merely that denomination of infinite goodness which, whilst most real and adorable, is difficult to conceive by our faculties and hard to express by our words. It no longer shines like a cold and distant star in the blue sky at night. It is now, besides all that it ever was, the love of a man for his brethren. It is now no longer only an attribute of the Deity, but the thrilling of a human heart. For there is only one Person in Jesus Christ—the person of God. Yet He has a real human nature, with nerves, senses, feelings, and in a certain reverential sense, even 'passions;' it being always understood, first, that His human impulses were utterly and completely under the control of His most glorious intelligence and of His divinity, and, secondly, that no shadow of sin or imperfection ever came nigh to His royal purity and perfection. The human soul which ruled this glorious Body was perfect in all knowledge and endowment, all science being infused therein, and the beatific vision shining always before it. Every grace and perfection which the human spirit is capable of was its portion by sovereign right; and it is in connection with the magnificent adorning of the human soul of Christ that we have, in the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Isaia, the revelation of the names which describe the fulness of the grace of the Holy Spirit; for, we are told, there rested upon Him the spirit of the Lord, the spirit of

¹¹ 1 John iii. 1.

wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of godliness, and He was filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord. It was the emotion, the pure, holy, sublime, but *human* act, of this grand soul and body that was now to be the love of God for men, without for an instant ceasing to be what it had been before in the depth of the eternities. He, whose will, and mind, and heart, and nerves vibrated and quivered with most pure love of His brethren—He was nothing less than the Infinite God; and therefore that human emotion of love was the love of God for men. This was truly a new religion.

It need not be said that, if now there was a new kind of love of God for man, so man found a new way of loving Him back. Henceforth it was not the intellect alone which was to be drawn and attracted by love, but it was the whole man. Man is very complex. He is made up of a hundred faculties, powers, appetites, and aspirations. His intelligence is, in theory, independent of the whole mob of his powers and longings; but we know that, in practice, his noblest part has a very hard fight, and that oftentimes it is dragged from its throne. Thus, except for the Incarnation, our intellectual hold on God and God's truth would be in far greater danger than it is. For now the sweetness of Jesus has captivated every faculty of man. We have only to meditate on Bethlehem, on Nazareth, or Gethsemane, to feel our own hearts breaking their earthly bonds and yielding sweetly to the thought of God's will and God's love. We have only to look at the crucifix, to feel our very sympathies

and passions, instead of opposing our understanding, taking its part, and joining with it in declaring that there is no evil but sin, and that we shall never rest till we give our whole heart to God.

Thus, whilst to a Christian God is all that He was to a Hebrew, He is also much more. He is still the God of psalmist and of prophet, of king and of patriarch. He is still the only One, the zealous God, the Mighty, the Just, the Faithful and the Merciful ; He is still the Rewarder and the Avenger. But He has come—oh! how much nearer! And as He has come nearer, we see—how much more plainly!—how sweet, and lovely, and loving He is ; we not only know, but understand how He loves us, and we have less difficulty in loving Him again.

Thus God reveals Himself in Christ. Jesus is the Word of God, hidden in the bosom of the Father from all eternity, one in substance with the Father, manifested in time to men, and by His very manifestation revealing God and God's love ; revealing, also, the value of those immortal souls of ours for whose well-being such stupendous things have been brought about.

JESUS CHRIST MAKES WORSHIP EASY.

The Lord hath appeared from afar to me. Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee. JEREMIAS xxxiii. 3.

LAST Sunday we considered how great a revelation of God and of God's love He made in becoming man in the way He did. We now go on further to consider what an effect this revelation has had on a man's *worship* of his Maker. From what is to be said on this head it will appear still more clearly what is meant by Christianity.

It is probably not necessary to prove to anyone here present that worship is the principal duty of man. Man has many powers; but there is one thing which distinguishes him from all other beings in this lower world, and that is his Reason. It is by his reason—that is, by his intelligence and his intellectual will, that a man is a man. He grows, like the plants; he feels and moves, like the brute creation; but he thinks, judges, reasons, and has aspirations on a higher level altogether than any other creature. If some men and women strangle their higher nature and have no use for their best faculties, we say they are brutes, and we ought to ask pardon of the brutes for saying so, for a degraded human being is as much lower than a brute as a dead animal is more unpleasant than the lifeless clod beneath our foot. If, then, our intelligence and our

rational will are our principal faculties, it is *their* occupation and exercise which is our principal work and duty. But about what must they be exercised? Without doubt, chiefly about the very best thing that exists; that is to say, about the Being Who made them, made them like Himself, and made them in such a way that, in the long run, and when the true life begins, they will be intolerably miserable unless they are near Him. If a man's only happiness lay in the possession of lands and riches far over the ocean, he would be a fool and a criminal if he did not think about them and desire them. But this is putting it in a very cold and incomplete way. *Our* supreme Good—our last end—is not a thing, but a Person. God, though we cannot adequately comprehend Him, is all that we call a Person, and far more. Now, we can speak to a person, and hear him speak; we can enter into society with him and into communion of various kinds; and we can love him, or hate him, as may be. Therefore, as reasonable beings, we are bound to think of God, to listen to Him, to speak to Him; and, considering Who and What He is, our thought and our speech to Him must take the shape of adoration, praise, self-offering, petition, thanksgiving and sorrow for all that is amiss. It is these six 'acts' which constitute worship, which is therefore the principal duty of every rational being. The word 'principal' includes four things. It means, first, that the duty of worship must be exercised by itself and for itself so as to take up a considerable portion of our lives. If we pass our lives, or even a year, a month, a week, or a day of our lives without worshipping God, we are

doing wrong, in a greater degree or in a less. If, secondly, we worship or adore anything but God, we do grievous wrong. If, again, we turn away from God to the inordinate love or the preference of anything that is not God, we do wrong, and we offend Him. And, finally, if we do not direct towards Him all our thoughts, our words and our acts, all our business and our pleasure, and every conscious movement of any of those powers and faculties which our reason can control, then again, in proportion to the gravity of the circumstances, we fail in our duty of worship. This is the meaning of our saying that worship is the principal duty of man.

Having laid down these principles in regard to worship, I think I hear you make the objection that if this be man's chief duty, the world at large sadly fails in fulfilling it. Our purpose, however, is not exactly to point out that. It is to see how the coming of Christ has made worship *easier*; to understand what *Christian* worship is, and so to take advantage to the utmost of the salvation of Christ Jesus.

The coming of our Lord, as we have seen more than once, was intended to bring God within the reach of our very limited faculties. In regard to worship our human faculties are limited in two ways: we forget God altogether because He is out of sight, or we are inclined to give Him shape and size and colour like a created and material thing. The first weakness leads to worldliness, the second to idolatry. Worldliness is not a very good word to express what we here mean. We do not mean atheism, that is, rejection of God's existence;

neither do we mean flagrant and open crime. But we mean the state of men—and there are millions of them among Christians—who simply, or mostly, live for the present life; who work, or play, merely, or chiefly, to be as happy as they can on this side of death, and leave God out of their lives. We may return to these unhappy men and women, for it is for them, most of all, that the Incarnation requires explaining and enforcing in these days. But let us here observe what the idolaters were, or are. The idolater is one who is very likely in good faith, simple and ignorant. He was born, perhaps, in his idolatry and knows no better. There have been millions of poor people, since the world began, who worshipped idols because they did not know any better, and who will not be blamed by God for that. Indeed, whatever may be said of the sin of those who introduced idolatry, or who may have shut out the light from the heathen races and peoples, the general state of idolatry is treated by the Holy Scriptures rather as a state of darkness and misfortune than as one of perversity or crime. But who can estimate the depth of such a misfortune! The false ideas of prayer, the absence of true rules of right and wrong, the ignorance of how to turn to God or be sorry for sin, and the consequent abandonment of soul and body to passion, to pride, and to sensuality—these are only a few of the results of heathenism. Yet, see how the poor, ignorant people seem to strive in their darkness to find God! As St. Paul said at Athens, they seemed to feel about and grope after Him, so truly is the instinct of Him written in our natures. They made figures of gold and

silver, of iron and clay, and they fondly imagined that the attributes of deity resided in the figures they had made. They had ideas that there must be power somewhere, and beauty, and wisdom, greater than any on earth. They felt how cruel was life, and how blind and deaf was nature and the world, and they cried out to these shapes to help them, to protect them, to avenge them. They wanted their god near them, and they liked to see his face, and his arm, and his footstool; they loved to feel that the walls of their temples shut in a mysterious power which was different from any other power; which might hurt them, but which also might be their friend. We cannot, perhaps, in these days understand the force, in human breasts, of the idolatrous impulse; because Christianity has so completely satisfied all there was good and natural in it, whilst lifting up into serener regions all those aspirations which make men long to see their God.

The task, therefore, of the Omnipotent, Who had resolved to save us, was to attract men's faculties to Himself in such a way as at once to extinguish idolatry and to force men to remember Him. The work was done when God the Son became Man and was called by the glorious name, Jesus. Nothing could have attracted men better than this. He stood before them—He stands before them—and He says, 'I am Jehovah; worship Me! I am a Man like yourselves; adore Me, praise Me, offer yourselves to Me, pray to Me, give your thanks and sorrow to Me; for you need go no further; I am the eternal God!' And men and women, hearing about Him, picturing Him to themselves, falling in

love, if I may use the expression, with His unspeakable attractiveness, have been drawn to worship Him, to find His worship easy, nay, to spend their lives in His worship.

If we consider a little more attentively, we find that the attractiveness of the Incarnate God is of a threefold sort. The first attraction is the attraction of human interest. The idea of God without the Incarnation, though not without deep and solemn interest, is to man either a blaze of light or a shadow. When we look up to heaven, the light fatigues us and makes all things indistinct; when we look to earth we see indications of the presence of our God which (except on very awful occasions) are faint like the track of the wind across the deep, or the flicker of pale lightning on a summer night. Meanwhile, with all our goodwill, with all our best endeavours to keep Him before our faculties, there is a varied and changing multitude of human interests which get in our way and occupy us in spite of ourselves. Ourselves, our work, our pleasures; our friends and their concerns; nature, science, art and history—these dispute the claims of God upon our interest, and therefore on our worship. We are like children whom their mother's voice is calling, yet who are distracted and taken up by flowers and toys and play. What has our Saviour done? He has placed Himself among human things, in order that, as human things attract our unstable thoughts, He might at least be able to enter into competition with other human things on their own ground. He has a Name and a history, He has a Mother, and the history of His birth

into this world is a picture which for tenderness and serene majesty has no rival in the records of the world. He is known to us by innumerable holy words and touching actions, each of which deepens the hold which His character has upon our thoughts, as a skilful painter, line by line, makes the ideal live upon the canvas. If we are drawn by things noble and beautiful, then He is most noble and beautiful in heart and soul and mind. If we are drawn by wisdom, then no one has ever been so wise as He. If power and might have charms for our fancy, the story of our Saviour tells us of wonders greater than any human hero has ever been dreamed to do. The study of Him, of the endowments of His human soul, of the powers of His intelligence, of the heights and the depths of His unspeakable grace, with the Godhead overshadowing it all, has afforded the Saints more to think about and to adore than most of us are even able to conceive. The picture of His face—as a child, a youth, a preacher, a sufferer—this has been denied us, but denied us because indeed it is better so; for no features, however perfect, but will grow common at last. Whereas, as it is, we know He had the face of a man, and looked out from His eyes on saint and sinner, on nature and humanity; but faith, or fancy guided by faith, fills up an outline that is never twice the same, yet never false, save that it is inadequate. We have the pages of holy writ; the pages which have described Him since He came, and the more marvellous pages which told what He would be like to generations long before; we have gospel and psalm, prophecy and canticle; and as we please we

weave a precious fabric of all sweet and grand and holy epithets which inspiration has used therein to shadow forth the beauty of the fairest among the children of men, and, as the veil of a tabernacle, we fling it over the face we shall never see till the judgment-day. But, somehow it is always *His* face, and it always seems as if it were familiar. We meet it at every turn of our earthly life. If we have been taught to know Jesus, there is hardly anything which does not remind us of Him, so intimately is He linked with the human interests of this world. Infancy, poverty, labour, suffering, are all somehow bound up with His memory and bring Him back to us. The Cross is over all the world; and the Cross, as we may see in the Catacombs, was originally the two first letters of the name Christ, as it is written in Greek. His name is connected with a land the most famous of all lands, and a book the greatest of all books. Literature is full of Him, and so is art. The interior of a Christian Church, if it is completely and truly Christian, brings Him to mind in a hundred symbols and shapes and scenes; and the Christian altar holds what is Himself, present to our faculties half by sense, half by faith, in a way analogous to that in which He shows Himself to us in the Incarnation itself. Thus, the picture of Jesus may and should seize, fill, and occupy our unstable hearts. From childhood upwards, the scenes of His earthly life should be our alphabet, our earliest reading, our chiefest knowledge. He has come in order to attract our hearts; and the more He is known the more He will attract. Devotion and worship may be said to

depend on our being penetrated with the story of the God-Man. Those who know Him not, who have not been familiar from infancy with Bethlehem and Nazareth, with Thabor and Calvary, cannot worship either as fervently or as continuously as Christians are intended to worship. Whilst, on the other hand, those who have used their eyes and their ears, their faith and their mind, to take in the picture of His blessed life, find prayer natural and worship easy; and even when the world has got hold of them, and the flesh has allowed them to turn their back on their God, a time comes when some scene in that most holy life brings repentance to their souls, and, as though in very deed Jesus had turned and looked upon them as once He looked on Peter, the sweet attraction of His humanity leads them back in sorrow to His feet.

The second attraction of the Incarnation is the attraction of condescension, or the drawing of the heart to the lowliness of Jesus Christ. Our Lord and God has placed Himself in the world, but He does not stand before us cold and majestic. We see one Who loves us; we cannot doubt of His love, because He lets us plainly see it. What is it that softens a man's heart to another man almost more than anything else? It is to see that that other man has been seeking for a chance of being kind to him. When, in our struggles or our misfortunes, we meet with a kindly look, or feel the grasp of a friendly hand, or are conscious of the support of a stout and honest arm, we are not men if we are not moved and melted. The great struggle is the struggle for the endless life that is coming; and the great friend is the Lord Almighty Who has stooped

from the heavens to persuade us to trust fondly in His love for us. To Him, the Everlasting, our love, or our safety, could make no difference, until He took a human heart which could really feel our perversity and our ingratitude. But for that very reason He came down and took it. And having come He lets us see, by word and gesture and work, that He wants us to come to Him; not allows us, but wants us. He tells us that He came 'to seek and to save.' He pictures Himself as a Good Shepherd, Who feeds and protects His sheep, and giveth His life for them. He labours among men and women, among poor and rich, innocent and sinful, among children and grown-up people, as a sign and a proof of what He wants the whole world to understand. It is this condescension, this stooping, reaching out His hand, waiting, seeking, and helping, which makes the Incarnation the masterpiece of the divine Wisdom. If He were not both God and man, there would not be so much in it. If He were not man He could not condescend; and if He were not God, the condescension would be very different. It is the combination of lowliness with awful majesty; it is the fact that He Who deigns to plead is He who claims to be worshipped—it is this that not only vanquishes the heart of man, but makes it so easy for that heart to worship, when worship is gratitude to a Brother, confidence in a Pastor, trust in a Teacher, and affection for One Who for our good has given His very life.

The third attraction of God Incarnate is the attraction of suffering, or the drawing of the heart of man by the pains and the sorrows of God made man. Here we are

in the presence of a mystery. Why should God have chosen to suffer? Not because God the Father delights in blood or torments. Not because we could not have been saved without it. But, to put it very briefly, because without the intensifying touch of the fire of suffering, that grand and pure Act of His sacred Heart which saved us, would have lacked, on its human side, the white heat of complete perfection. For suffering intensifies. If we love God, and turn to Him in any kind of worship, suffering, accepted, intensifies the act of our heart. Jesus, therefore, suffered. Suffering took His hand when he entered into the world, and walked by His side all through His life; and she never left Him until the Cross had finished its work, and the spirit and the body parted for a time. That He has suffered is a part of the deep attraction of His Incarnation. It is not difficult to understand how much easier it has become to worship God since God has suffered. There are chiefly two reasons. The first is this. Suffering makes a good part of the life of all of us. Now, suffering is useless, and indeed hurtful, to our souls, unless we accept it lovingly, and are strong under it. But to accept suffering is to turn to God with acts of worshipping resignation; and to be strong, means to resolve and to pray for strength; both, again, acts which we must make *to God*, or we do not make them at all. But God Himself has suffered! Could anything induce us more strongly to fall at His feet in resignation, or to implore Him for courage and resolution? Or rather, I will appeal to experience, and I will ask if, ever since Gethsemane and Calvary, the heart of man has not

found its best strength, its deepest resignation, in the sorrows of its Saviour? Because He has suffered, He knows better than anyone can know what suffering is. He is not likely to turn a deaf ear to anyone who comes to Him, bearing in his body or his heart those wounds and bruises, those thorns and nails, which *He* chose so deliberately as the best choice for Himself. This is the way in which He draws those who suffer to transform their sorrows into worship at His feet. But this is not all. The sufferings of the Incarnate God attract in a deeper way. There is no more powerful emotion of the human heart than that of *compassion*. Pity or compassion takes the heart into its own hands, and does not wait for cold reasons or the considerations of prudence. And when a man acts justly or kindly, how much hotter and more intense is his justice or his kindness when his heart, at the same time, is touched with pity. But who, my brethren, among all the wise men of old times in all the world, could ever have foretold or guessed that it would ever have been possible to worship the Everlasting God with the worship of compassion? Yet so it has come to pass. This powerful spring of human action is now, by a master-stroke of divine wisdom and attraction, a moving force in drawing us to worship. Pity is strong enough, as we well know, to make us forget our duty very often; but here it drives us to God. The scenes of the Gospel become so many moving pictures to make us love our God the more. The more we meditate, the more we understand how He must have suffered. Our hearts are stirred with pity at the roughness and rigours of Bethlehem. We think of His

poverty, and of His mother's, and we feel ourselves grow warm within. We follow the sternness of His apostolate, and we are filled with sympathy. The dark mystery of the Agony, the more we understand it, the more it seizes and thrills our soul with grief. The scourges, the thorns, the scoffings, and the blows easily reach the very fibres of our own feeling, once we allow ourselves to dwell upon them. And the Cross itself, since that terrible drama which went slowly through in the eclipse outside the walls of Jerusalem, holds within itself so many living lightnings of pity to thrill the heart which touches it, that it alone suffices to soften all human hardness and draw all human love to Him Who hangs thereon. Thus, compassion for the suffering Jesus has, in all the Christian centuries, led to reflection and repentance. Compassion has led to the sacrifice of self. Compassion has been the worship of millions, who have clung to the Crucifix as their book, their science, and their treasure. One of the marks or 'notes' of true Christianity is to make much of the Crucifix. The Crucifix is the picture, the summing up of all those innumerable sufferings of our Saviour which He chose for Himself as His best choice. Our Churches display the Crucifix on their altars, as a sign of Christian belief and practice. Our books are full of the sacred Passion. Our Saints have said that tears, or pity, for the sufferings of our Lord are very dear to Him, and will bring us deeper into His bosom in the coming life. And there is no one who has been taught Christianity as it should be taught who does not understand how that sacred Passion and Death draw

his heart to sorrow and repentance, to worship and to love.

From these considerations on the threefold attractiveness of the Incarnate God—the attraction of human interest, the attraction of condescension, and the attraction of suffering—we may conclude, I think, that Christian worship is intended to be aided and assisted by the contemplation, under all its various aspects, of the sacred Humanity of our Lord and Saviour. A worship, therefore, which does not worship the God-Man; which does not dwell on the circumstances of His life; which does not adore *Him*, pray to *Him*, practise self-offering to Him; a worship which does not make a great deal of His sufferings and practise pity for them; a worship which deprives little children, and the uneducated, and the poor, yea, and the rich and cultured, of pictures of the Infant Jesus, of pictures of Him symbolising His sacred Heart, above all of His cross and the figure that is nailed thereon; such a worship is not complete or adequate Christianity, because it fails to take advantage of what Christ has given.

JESUS CHRIST AND HOLINESS.

I beseech you, be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. 1 Cor. iv. 16.

HAVING considered what Christ has revealed to us, by His coming, as to God and God's love, and also as to God's worship, we now come to inquire what effect the Incarnation has wrought upon the world in regard to the *service of God in general*.

For although man's principal duty is Worship, still, being what he is, he has many duties besides. These duties arise either from the law of God or the law of man. The law of God is made known to us in two ways; either by the light of natural reason or by direct revelation. By nature and reason we perceive that we must serve the Creator, that we must honour our parents, take care of our children, obey the laws of the state, steal not, kill not, refrain from wronging our neighbour, and repress our carnal appetites. God's revelation has partly renewed and confirmed this law of nature, and partly added certain new precepts. Finally, the law of man binds us in certain matters, spiritual as well as temporal, where man has the right to impose obedience.

It is unnecessary to say that the general question of God's service, apart from our worshipping Him by the heart, is of the gravest importance. True, external

service is useless without interior worship. To obey God's law outwardly is unprofitable unless we also obey it with the heart; and to obey with the heart is to worship. To be kind to others is unprofitable unless we turn the heart also to God in or before the act of kindness, explicitly or implicitly; and such turning of the heart is worship. Unless worship accompanies whatever our hands do, and all the steps of our feet, much of our life is barren, sterile, and unproductive; and it is to be feared that, through our failing to direct, purify, and intensify our more active life by interior worship—in other words, by prayer and self-offering—the lives of many Christians are to a great degree smitten with the sterility here referred to.

But, for all this, exterior service and obedience is of no small use in regard to interior; it is a proof, a sign, and an intensifying of our interior love and worship. Made as we are, and living among such surroundings as we do, duties of various kinds are as necessary for us as our very being and constitution. Man is bound to help his fellow-man and to abstain from wronging his neighbour just because he and his fellow-men are made in the way they are. To assert, therefore, that we love and worship God, and yet to refuse to serve man, is to assert a lie. On the other hand, to be zealous in doing God's will and law is a proof and a sign that He is really dear to us. It is necessary to insist on this, because the self-deception of the human heart is so great in its possibilities that you do find men who persuade themselves that they can worship their Maker without keeping His law. The truth is, their feelings

deceive them. You will find men and women who (as they express it) feel 'good' on a Sunday, or feel 'saved' at a meeting, or whose tenderness is excited by our Blessed Saviour's sufferings, or again, who long in a kind of way for heavenly rest—and yet these very persons were habitually unjust in their dealings, or given to impurity, or the slaves of temper and passion; and they take no pains to get out of the mire of their sinful life. These people are, as I have said, sometimes themselves under a delusion. Their feelings are real enough at the time; but their delusion is to think that *feeling* is love and worship. Love and worship may overflow into the feelings—well and good; the feelings help to make our worship easier; but love and worship are in the reason, not the feelings. To understand, to resolve, to resist, to offer the heart, to regret sin—these are acts of worship; and they cannot be real without affecting our external actions. And, as just now observed, when our external life of service is in accordance with our interior life of worship, then what we do *intensifies* our love and worship. We are told by scientific men that light is colourless in itself; the lovely colours of the universe are the result of light being stopped or reflected by something solid; and even the heavenly blue of the cloudless sky would not be there were it not for certain innumerable minute particles of matter which seize and translate the flood of radiance, itself too subtle for the sense to apprehend. So, the work of our hands and the service of our lips and the ministrations of our bodies give colour and intensity to the ethereal liftings-up of the soul; they increase the heart's

devotion, and by their very resistance—by the very fact that they make a call upon our resolution, our courage, or our self-denial—they give fresh heat to the spiritual impulse from which they proceed.

If, then, our Blessed Lord came to save us, as He undoubtedly did, and if the service of God and obedience to God's holy law are of such supreme importance to our spiritual well-being, it is quite certain that His coming must have had an important bearing upon our service. In other words, Christian service of God must be, to some degree at least, a different thing and an easier thing than service would have been had not Christ come.

The first remark which will occur to everyone is, that the very revelation of God's nearness to us and of His love, which He has made in the Incarnation, attracts man's heart to obey Him and makes service easier. There are one or two among the Psalms of David which recount at great length the mercies and benefits of God to His chosen people. Psalms lxxvii. and civ. are of this kind, written in the time of David himself, if not earlier. Their object is, to rouse the people to remember God and to serve Him by the thought of His benefits and His tender mercies: 'that they may put their hope in God . . . and may seek His commandments. That they may not become like their fathers, a perverse and exasperating generation,'¹ 'that they might observe His justifications and seek after His law.'² Nothing can exceed the fervour and tenderness with which the Psalmist dwells upon the

¹ Ps. lxxvii. 7; 8. ² Ps. civ. 45.

marvellous works of the God of Israel: 'Sing to Him, yea, sing praises to Him; relate all His wondrous works. . . . Seek ye the Lord and be strengthened, seek His face for evermore. . . . He is the Lord our God, His judgments are in all the earth.'³ And then the stirring record of the olden time is unrolled, and the great names of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, of Moses, of Canaan, of Egypt, of Sinai and of the Wilderness, are poured forth in Lyric phrase to kindle the hearts of those who heard. But the God Who did all this to bind His people to Himself has done things far more marvellous since then. Compare with these Psalms of the Old Testament the opening words of the Canticle of the last of the Prophets—I mean of the patriarch St. Zachary, given at the beginning of the Gospel of St. Luke. 'Blessed be the Lord God of Israel'—why? 'Because He hath visited and wrought the redemption of His people.' The call of Abraham, the blessing of Jacob, the story of Joseph, the Red Sea, and the Land of Promise—all these are but figures of some 'better thing,' which has been vouchsafed to us. Can anyone forget the Lord that was crucified? Can anyone refuse to obey the Babe of Bethlehem? Can we shut our ears to the preacher of the Sermon on the Mount? What is Pharoah and his yoke in comparison with sin and the demon? What were the wonders of Egypt to the mighty cry of Jesus when He said, 'It is finished!' and the darkness vanished for ever? The black rocks of the desert and the forty years' wandering are less terrible than to grope and stumble through our mortal life with-

³ Ps. civ. 2, 4, 7

out the guidance of our Lord and Master; and the Promised Land, which Moses was forbidden to enter and only looked on from afar, was but a shadow of that life and vision and peace which our Saviour has conquered for all of us by His precious blood. For He came, as the father of the Baptist said, that, 'being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve Him without fear, in holiness and justice before Him all our days.'⁴ What a Psalm would David have to write now, if he lived in these days, to celebrate the Life and Passion of that Saviour Whom He so clearly foretold! Or rather, what hymns and songs of praise, as fervent as the Psalms of old, have been written in all ages by the Christian saints, and are even now a part of the Church's liturgy and of the people's prayer, celebrating day by day the benefits of Christ our Lord, and the gratitude and obedience we owe Him Who hath done so much for us. The Advent Vespers are over in most churches by this hour to-night; but the Church's children have been singing the "Conditor alme siderum," the Advent Vespers Hymn.

Bright Maker of the starry poles,
Eternal Light of faithful souls,
Christ, our Saviour, oh! espouse
Our cause and hear our humble vows.

Who, that Thou mightst our ransom pay,
And wash the stains of sin away,
Wouldst from a Virgin's womb proceed,
And on the cross a victim bleed!

⁴ St. Luke i. 74.

Whose glorious power, Whose saving Name,
No sooner any voice can frame,
But heaven and earth and hell agree,
To honour them with trembling knee.

So sings the Church in Advent; and so, adapting her lyre to the circling seasons, she sings as the year goes round.

But there is much more than this to be said of the service and the obedience which the Christian—that is, the true follower of Christ—ought to pay, and can pay, to his Maker and his Father. Love and gratitude are strong motive powers. They will often move men to do even heroic things for those whom they gratefully love. But there is this difference between the service of God and the return of gratitude to man, that whereas our gratitude may, and probably does, really confer a benefit upon our fellow-men, we can give nothing to God which He has not already. When we render loving service to our friend, our heart expands with a glow of affection; or at least we have the satisfaction of seeing that he is pleased and benefited; and in either case our trouble is more than half repaid. But we serve God for our own good, and not for His advantage. Our service of Him, moreover, is something that we do to ourself. We offer Him our heart, our hands, our tongue, our whole being; but our offering, our service, consists, in a great measure, in purifying, restraining, directing, and ennobling our being and its faculties. Our service of God is not, therefore, a simple act of gratitude, a single burst of enthusiasm, an isolated impulse of generosity. It is rather a living up to rule, a continuous discipline, a training, a schooling, a syste-

matic plan of life. To serve God we have to be moved, it is true, by impulses of love, and, if possible, of enthusiasm ; but we also want a rule to follow. To learn our lesson of living is not an easy thing, although the means are not wanting ; but to learn it and also to live up to it is more difficult still.

Here, then, was matter for the wisdom of the All-Wise ; to plan a salvation which should supply weak and erring man, not only with a rule of life, but with a force that should make him learn it and keep it.

It is well known that there is one way of teaching a rule of conduct which is often successful when all other means fail. That way is the way of *Imitation*. The teacher of children does not, at first, say many words to the infant, or give it long rules or explanations. He shows it a picture, or he uses gesture, or he tells a story ; and the infant mind drinks in rules and principles by concrete examples. In the most important matters, the human race are only children to the end. If they can see a thing done, that thing looks easier. If a good man passes by, they mark what they must do to be good. If saints and heroes draw the eyes of men upon them, then men are struck with what is done, and from the dazzling actions of sanctity and heroism they take in, more by feeling than by reasoning, the laws and principles which make saints and heroes. It is precisely this marvellous force and attraction of *Imitation* that the Incarnation has brought to bear upon the heart of man ; but in a way which only divine Wisdom could ever have found out, and nothing but divine Love have carried through.

We may here remark, as in substance we have remarked before, that for men to be able to imitate God Almighty is a marvel which no wise man of this world could ever have predicted. It is another of the consequences of the union in one Person of the divine and human nature. This Person—this Lord and Saviour, Who was born of a woman yet reigned from ages of ages, Who obeyed yet was the Omnipotent, and Who died yet is the ever-living life—has taken His place among men. He has taken human infirmities (without sin), felt human troubles, battled with human difficulties, exercised human virtues with His human heart and soul. The very things which His people and flock have to do in order to be saved, these He Himself has set Himself to do. In His life He exercised worship and prayer; He lived as a child with parents; He lived as a man with neighbours; He helped the poor; He worked for His bread; He suffered for righteousness. Greater things than these He also did; but His more wondrous works did not take Him out of the rank of real men, or make His human nature a sham or His human actions a delusion. He really felt pain; He really obeyed; He really humbled Himself; He was really kind to others; He really and truly prayed. Were there any room in Christian faith for suspecting that His human actions were not real, the power of His example would wither away. When the angel Raphael accompanied the Hebrew youth in human form, he only *seemed* to be a man; he seemed ‘to eat and drink;’ but his body was a phantasm, a shape ruled and directed by the angelic spirit. But Christ, besides that He was God,

had, and has, a body and a soul; He is true man. What is the reason of that curious sympathy which moves the heart of man to imitate the noble and the good? It is very difficult to analyse; but it certainly exists, and it can be described. Example, alas! can attract to evil as well as to good. But evil is not hard and difficult like good; and yet our poor weak hearts, when they see good example, are warmed and moved, as if some secret fibre of their own nature were touched. Good example is made up of two elements—the sight of what is good and the sight of a living person who is doing good. Man's soul, if you give it fair play, thrills at the sight of what is beautiful, true, and good; and man's heart, if it be not a degraded heart, thrills at the sight of the living, palpitating efforts of another heart to be good and to do good. We cannot explain it; it is the way we are made. But when the Incarnate Word is the example, then the sympathy of our natures must necessarily rise high and strong, like some great earthly tide which all the influences of the heavens have combined to draw to its height. That eternal love which could not rest patiently in the inaccessible eternities, but found its way amongst men; that love which has made the Infinite our brother, our shepherd, and our comforter; that love which came to seek on earth that 'jewelled robe' of suffering which it could not find in the heavens; that unspeakable love walks the narrow human road, carrying the knapsack of human concerns, its hands grasping the staff of a man, its feet wounded by the stones of life, its face set to the object and goal of human existence. See Him go by! Thank God, He is familiar to us. We

are urged and moved to try to be even as He is. We say, in the secret hours of our prayer and our thought: 'He is meek and gentle; would that I could crush and keep down my pride and my passion! He is poor, having no house for His head, often without food and without money; my own greed, and my covetousness and my ceaseless solicitude—how they separate me from Him! He is kind and sweet and merciful, spending Himself on others; I will try to be considerate, and kind; to help to save souls and to cherish the poor and the helpless. His life is a life of hard labour, willingly taken up, unshrinkingly carried through; as long as I seek ease and sensuality, I am no soldier of His! He loves suffering; I, perhaps, cannot even understand why He does so; but oh! how unlike Him as He passes by with His Cross and Crown of Thorns, how unlike Him am I who dread to suffer and who spend my life in trying to avoid it!' Reasonings like this prove more to the Christian heart than volumes of argument and advice. To be in sin, and to feel, when one reads of Jesus or hears Him spoken of as the festivals come round—to feel that we are strangers to Him, are utterly unlike Him, and have no part or lot with Him—surely, even hard hearts must be disturbed at this! To learn of Him, because He is meek and humble of heart, to come after Him, to take up our cross and follow Him—this must be sweet, this must be life and light and consolation to every heart which has learnt or tasted Who He is—that Christ Whose name we bear.

Thus the life of our Blessed Saviour, His deeds, His words and His sufferings, continually attract Christians

to a life of obedience, of purity, and of worship—in a word, to the service of God and the keeping of all God's commandments. But there is still something more.

It is a precept of the Lord that we should be 'perfect', even as our Heavenly Father is perfect.⁵ In all ages and countries men have sighed after the 'perfect' life. For a man has to choose and discriminate between end and end, between means and means. A tree grows according to its nature and its surroundings; a beast follows its natural instincts, and does not judge or make rational choice. But men must choose; and a bad choice makes a bad man, a good choice a good man. But what to choose? What to aim at? What path to take? What life to lead? These questions are, no doubt, partly answered by reason, and wholly by revelation. We know quite well what we are made for: Whom we must serve, and what we must do to serve Him. But it is only Christians who know what the 'perfect' life is, only those who really understand Christ's example, it is only *those* who fully comprehend how to make the very most out of the complex actions and decisions which make up the career of a human life.

There is no such thing as absolute perfection in the life of any merely human person. When we are commanded to be 'perfect' it is meant that we must be comparatively perfect—less imperfect. The word 'perfect,' as used by our Divine Lord, is the same word that we meet with so frequently in the Old Testament—where the chosen people are called upon to give to God 'a perfect heart';⁶ where the heart of Asa is said to

⁵ Matthew v. 48.

⁶ Par. xv. 17.

be perfect, whilst Amasias⁷ is said to have done what was good, yet not with a 'perfect heart.' The word suggests a certain unreserved service, a zeal, a completeness, the result of which differs so widely from merely ordinary goodness, that it may be without exaggeration called 'perfection.' Now what is a man's perfection? Undoubtedly, it is best expressed in our Lord's own words; it is, to love the Lord our God with our whole heart and mind and strength. Other things are included in it, just as the mixture of many elements and the power of fire go to the making of the well-tempered blade of the sword, or the marvellous strength of the death-bearing cannon. To give the whole heart, then, to God is perfection. It is the perfection, as it is the duty, of all, without exception. There is not one perfection for priests and another for the laity, one for monks and nuns and another for worldly people; all are bound to give their whole heart to God; and the more fervently, completely, and constantly this is done, the greater is the perfection of the Christian heart. But what is it that interferes with our thus giving the whole heart to God? What is it that turns the heart away, interrupts its love, diminishes its fervour? The answer is plain. Our surroundings. The things, occurrences, places, people, round about us. In other words, what the spiritual books call Creatures; or, in other words again, the different classes of things summed up in the names of money, honour, and pleasure. To keep these troublesome things at a distance, then, would be to give our love of God a chance of being perfect; just

⁷ 2 Par xxv. 2.

as a wall built round a fortress keeps the enemy outside, and, though not impregnable itself, gives the defenders time to meet the assaults of the foe. To keep away money or the love of money, to keep away esteem and honour, to keep away sensuality and pleasure, is to ensure a certain degree of perfection ; and to keep them away systematically, by rule, and for a long time, is to go a long way towards making our life continuously and systematically perfect.

I ask you now to look at the life of our Lord and Saviour. We must take for granted that He knew what kind of life it is that is best adapted to make a man's life perfect. What, then, do we find to be the character of His life? I can sum it up in four words : poverty, obscurity, obedience, suffering. Observe that He deliberately chose it so. He might conceivably have come among us as a great king, rich beyond all dreams, mighty and honoured, visibly glorious and blessed as He is now in the heavens. He had a work to do, viz., to convert the world, which, had we been consulted, we should unanimously have asserted would have been best promoted by wealth and power. But with this before Him as His purpose, and knowing, as He did, what was the very best means He could adopt, He chose poverty, obscurity, obedience, and suffering. He chose them to receive Him into the world, as courtiers receive their sovereign. He chose them as the pillars of that humble house of Nazareth where He spent nearly thirty of His precious years. He chose them to lead Him to Jerusalem and to conduct Him to Calvary : and when He died and these His four

faithful companions separated at the foot of the Cross, they went into the wide world and they have carried Christ's name upon them ever since.

Now you will see what I mean by the Imitation of Christ. No Christian is a real Christian who does not acknowledge that poverty, contempt, and suffering are the BEST. It is not enough to say that we must be resigned to what God sends us; we must also confess that they are the *means* of perfection, which a true-minded Christian would not only tolerate, but choose; choose, because they are the best means to intensify the love of our hearts for God. In the Church, this tradition has always been kept up. Voluntary poverty has always been practised by many and esteemed by all. Self-denial in many lawful pleasures has been looked upon as most meritorious. Self-inflicted suffering has been enthusiastically chosen, as a stimulus to love, by all who have been devoted to the service of God. The existence of religious orders, with fixed and stable vows which prevent them from possessing or enjoying, which bind them to celibacy and to obedience, is a proof of that Christian instinct which urges the Christian heart to erect around itself a barrier against the temptations that surround it. This ideal of the perfect life may have been realised fully by few; it is certain that it has influenced tens of thousands so to strive after it that they have been drawn nearer to God, and that their human lives have a right to be called, in a certain true and real sense, perfect lives. It is certain, also, that, like a beacon which shines out over the stormy ocean, this ideal of the perfect life has guided many a man

and woman who have never reached it; has made them correct and check their hearts, withdraw themselves from too great an affection to the world, and sigh with a feeling that purified them and elevated them, after a perfection they were not strong enough or brave enough to acquire. The history of the Saints, the story of the desert and the cloister, of those who have given up innocent pleasure and sought out unnecessary pain, has made the whole world more pure and more sweet, as the ocean storms purify the valleys of the inland. And never was there a time when such an ideal was more required than now. Refinement, luxury, selfishness even in doing good—these are the plagues of the world wherever the world has the means. Purity of heart strictness of thought, carefulness as to personal sin—where are these to be found? External respectability, the keeping of the law, are, it would seem, all that many men aim at; wherever it is possible they are soft, self-indulgent, and careless of personal sin. And as long as we have forms of Christianity which deny the ideal of the perfect life, which mock at voluntary poverty, which condemn voluntary chastity and obedience, and which ignore altogether the ascetical life, we shall have a sort of service of God which is maimed and imperfect; people worshipping God with the lips, but their hearts far from Him.

Let our conclusion then be that the Imitation of Christ is part of the purpose of the Incarnation; and that those are blind who do not see that Poverty, Obscurity, Obedience, and voluntary Suffering are written all over the Gospel record. The Christianity to

which Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience are dead virtues is a dead Christianity. To be living Christians we must be imitators of Christ, with the Apostles, the Martyrs, and the Saints.

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